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ANNE AND OTHER TALES

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IN ONE VOLUME.

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ANNE

AND OTHER TALES.

BY

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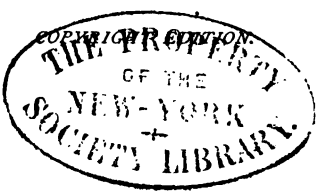

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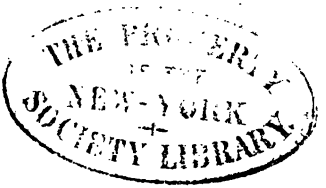

ANNE.

PART THE FIRST.

"WHY, what's the matter with *you*?" cried the Squire.

"Matter enough," responded old Coney, who had come hobbling into our house, and sat down with a groan. "If you had the gout in your great toe, Squire, as I've got it in mine, you'd soon feel what the matter was."

"You have been grunting over that gout for days past, Coney!"

"So I have. It won't go in and it won't come out; it stops there on purpose to torment me with perpetual twinges. I have been over to Timberdale Parsonage this morning, and the walk has pretty nigh done for me."

The Squire laughed. We often did laugh at Coney's gout: which never seemed to be very bad, or to get beyond incipient "twinges."

"Better have stayed at home and nursed your gout than have pranced off to Timberdale."

"But I had to go," said the farmer. "Jacob Lewis sent for me."

Mr. Coney spoke of Parson Lewis, Rector of Timberdale. At this time the parson was on his last legs, going fast to his rest. His mother and old Coney's mother had been first cousins, which accounted for the intimacy between the parsonage and the farm. It was Eastertide, and we were spending it at Crabb Cot.

"Do you remember Thomas Lewis, the doctor?" asked old Coney.

"Remember him! aye, that I do," was the Squire's answer. "What of him?"

"He has been writing to the parson to take a house for him; he and his daughter are coming to live in old England again. Poor Lewis can't look out for one himself, so he has put it upon me. And much I can get about, with this lame foot!"

"A house at Timberdale?"

"Either in the neighbourhood of Timberdale or Crabb, Dr. Lewis writes: or he'd not mind Islip. I saw his letter. Jacob says there's nothing vacant at Timberdale at all likely to suit. We have been thinking of that little place over here, that the people have just gone out of."

"What little place?"

"Maythorn Bank. 'Twould be quite large enough."

"And it's very pretty," added the Squire, "Thomas Lewis coming back! Wonders will never cease. How he could reconcile himself to stay away all his life, I can't tell. Johnny lad, he will like to see you. He and your father were as thick as inkle weavers."

"Aye! Ludlow was a good friend to him while he was doing nothing," nodded old Coney. "As to his

staying away, I expect he could not afford to live in England. He has had a legacy left him now, he tells the parson.—What are you asking, Johnny?"

"Did I ever know Dr. Lewis?"

"Not you, lad. Thomas Lewis went abroad ages before you were born, or thought of. Five-and-twenty years he must have been away."

"More than that," said the Squire.

This Thomas Lewis was half-brother to the Rector of Timberdale, but was not related to the Coneys. He served his time, when a boy, to a surgeon at Worcester. In those days young men were apprenticed to doctors just as they were to other trades. Young Lewis was steady and clever; but so weak in health that when he was qualified and ought to have set up on his own account, he could not. People were wondering what would become of him, for he had no money, when by one of those good chances that rarely fail in time of need, he got a post as travelling companion to a nobleman, rich and sickly, who was going to reside in the warmth of the south of France. They went. It brought up Thomas Lewis's health well; made quite another man of him; and when, a little later, his patron died, he found that he had taken care of his future. He had left the young surgeon a competency of two hundred a year. Mr. Lewis stayed on where he was, married a lady who had some small means, took a foreign medical degree to become Dr. Lewis, and obtained a little practice amidst the English that went to the place in winter. They had been obliged to live frugally, though an income of from two to three hundred a year goes a great deal farther over the water than it does in England: and perhaps the lack of means to travel

had kept Dr. Lewis from visiting his native land. Very little had been known of him at home; the letters interchanged by him and the parson were few and far between. Now, it appeared, the doctor had again dropped into a legacy of a few hundred pounds, and was coming back with his daughter—an only child. The wife was dead.

Maythorn Bank, the pretty little place spoken of by Mr. Coney, was taken. It belonged to Sir Robert Tenby. A small, red-brick house, standing in a flower garden, with a delightful view from its windows of the charming Worcestershire scenery and the Malvern Hills in the distance. Excepting old Coney's great rambling farm-homestead close by, it was the nearest house to our own. But the inside, when it came to be looked at, was found to be in a state of dilapidation, not at all fit for a gentleman's habitation. Sir Robert Tenby was applied to, and he gave directions that it should be put in order.

Before this was completed, the Rector of Timberdale died. He had been suffering from ailments and sorrow for a long while; and in the sweet spring season, the season that he had loved above all other seasons, when the May birds were singing and the May flowers were blooming, he crossed the river that divides us from the eternal shores.

Mr. Coney had to see to the new house then upon his own responsibility; and when it was finished and the workmen were gone out of it, he went over to Worcester, following Dr. Lewis's request, and ordered in a sufficiency of plain furniture. By the middle of June all was ready, a maid-servant engaged, and the

doctor and his daughter were at liberty to come when they pleased.

We had just got home for the Midsummer holidays when they arrived. Old Coney took me to the station to meet them; he said there might be parcels to carry. Once, a French lady had come on a visit to the farm, and she brought with her fifteen small hand-packages and a bandbox.

"And these people are French too, you see, Johnny," reasoned old Coney. "Lewis can't be called anything better, and the girl was born there. Can't even speak English, perhaps. I'm sure he has had time to forget his native tongue."

But they spoke English just as readily and fluently as we did; even the young lady, Anne, had not the slightest foreign accent. And there were no small packages, nothing but three huge trunks and a sort of large reticule, which she carried herself, and would not give up to me. I liked her looks the moment I saw her. You know I always take likes or dislikes. A rather tall girl, light and graceful, with a candid face, a true and sweet voice, and large, soft brown eyes that met mine frankly and fearlessly.

But the doctor! He was like a shadow. A tall man with stooping shoulders; handsome, thin features, hollow cheeks, and scanty hair. But every look and movement bespoke the gentleman; every tone of his low voice was full of considerate courtesy.

"What a poor weak fellow!" lamented old Coney aside to me. "It's just the Thomas Lewis of the years gone by; no health, no stamina. I'm afraid he is only come home to die."

They liked the house, and liked everything in it;

and he thanked old Coney very earnestly for the trouble he had taken. I never saw a man, as I learnt later, so considerate for the feelings of others, or so grateful for any little service rendered to himself.

"It is delightful," said Miss Lewis, smiling at me. "I shall call it our little château. And those hills in the distance are the beautiful Malvern Hills that my father has so often told me of!"

"How well you speak English!" I said. "Just as we do."

"Do you suppose I could do otherwise, when my father and my mother were English? It is in truth my native tongue. I think I know England better than France, I have always heard so much of it."

"But you speak French as a native?"

"Oh, of course. German also."

"Ah, I see you are an accomplished young lady, Miss Lewis."

"I am just the opposite," she said, with a laugh. "I never learnt accomplishments. I do not play; I do not sing; I do not draw; I do not — but yes, I do dance: everybody dances in France. Ours was not a rich home, and my dear mother brought me up to be useful in it. I can make my own clothes; I can cook you an omelette, or——"

"Anne, this is Mr. Todhetley," interrupted her father.

The Squire had come in through the open glass doors, round which the jessamine was blooming. When they had talked a bit, he took me up to Dr. Lewis.

"Has Coney told you who he is? William Ludlow's son. You remember *him*?"

"Remember William Ludlow! I must forget myself

before I could forget him," was the doctor's answer, as he took both my hands in his and held me before him to look into my eyes. The tears were rising in his own.

"A pleasant face to look at," he was pleased to say. "But they did not name him William?"

"No. We call him Johnny."

"One generation passes away and another springs up in its place. How few, how few of those I knew are now left to welcome me! Even poor Jacob has not stayed."

Tears seemed to be the fashion just then. I turned away, when released, and saw them in Miss Lewis's eyes as she stood against the window-sill, absently playing with the white-flowered jessamine.

"When they begin to speak of those who are gone, it always puts me in mind of mamma," she said, in a whisper, as if she would apologise to me for the tears. "I can't help it."

"Is it long since you lost her?"

"Nearly two years; and home has not been the same to papa since. I do my best; but I am not my mother. I think it was that which made papa resolve to come to England when he found he could afford it. Home is but triste, you see, when the dearest one it contained has gone out of it."

It struck me that the house could not have had one dearer in it than Anne. She was years and years older than I, but I began to wish she was my sister.

And her manners to the servant were so nice—a homely country girl, named Sally, engaged by Mr. Coney. Miss Lewis told the girl that she hoped she would be happy in her new place, and that she would help her

when there was much work to do. Altogether Anne Lewis was a perfect contrast to the fashionable damsels of that day, who could not make themselves out to appear too fine.

The next day was Sunday. We had just finished breakfast, and Mrs. Todhetley was nursing her toothache, when Dr. Lewis came in, looking more shadowy than ever in his black Sunday clothes, with the deep band on his hat. They were going to service at Timberdale, and he wanted me to go with them.

"Of course I have not forgotten the way to Timberdale," said he; "but there's an odd, shy feeling upon me of not liking to walk about the old place by myself. Anne is strange to it also. We shall soon get used to it, I dare say. Will you go, Johnny?"

"Yes, sir."

"Crabb church is close by, Lewis," remarked the Squire, "and it's a steaming hot day."

"But I must go to Timberdale this morning. It was poor Jacob's church, you know, for many years. And though he is no longer there, I should like to see the desk and pulpit which he filled."

"Aye, to be sure," readily acquiesced the Squire. "I'd go with you myself, Lewis, but for the heat."

Dr. Lewis said he should take the roadway, not the short cut through Crabb Ravine. It was a good round, and we had to start early. I liked Anne better than ever: no one could look nicer than she did in her trim black dress. As we walked along, Dr. Lewis frequently halted to recognise old scenes, and ask me was it this place, or that.

"That fine place out yonder?" he cried, stopping to point to a large stone house half a mile off the

road, partly hidden amidst its beautiful grounds. "I ought to know whose it is. Let me see!"

"It is Sir Robert Tenby's seat—Bellwood. Your landlord, sir."

"Aye, to be sure—Bellwood. In my time it was Sir George's, though."

"Sir George died five or six years ago."

"Has Sir Robert any family? He must be middle-aged now."

"I think he is forty-five, or so. He is not married."

"Does he chiefly live here?"

"About half his time; the rest he spends at his house in London. He lives very quietly. We all like Sir Robert."

We sat in the rector's pew, having it to ourselves. Herbert Tanerton did the duty, and gave a good sermon. Nobody yet was appointed to the vacant living, which was in Sir Robert Tenby's gift. Herbert, meanwhile, took charge of the parish, and many people thought he would get it—as he did, later.

The Bellwood pew faced the rector's, and Sir Robert sat in it alone. A fine-looking man, with greyish hair, and a homely face that you took to at once. He seemed to pay the greatest attention to Herbert Tanerton's sermon; possibly was deliberating whether he was worthy of the living, or not. In the pew behind him sat Mrs. Macbean, an old lady who had been housekeeper at Bellwood during two generations; and the Bellwood servants sat farther down.

We were talking to Herbert Tanerton outside the church after service, when Sir Robert came up and spoke to the parson. He, Herbert, introduced Dr. Lewis

to him as the late rector's brother. Sir Robert shook hands with him at once, smiled pleasantly at Anne, and nodded to me as he continued his way.

"Do you like your house?" asked Herbert.

"I shall like it by-and-by, no doubt," was the doctor's answer. "I should like it now but for the paint. The smell is dreadful."

"Oh, that will soon go off," cried Herbert.

"Yes, I hope so: or I fear it will make me ill."

In going back we took Crabb Ravine, and were at home in no time. They asked me to stay dinner, and I did so. We had a loin of lamb, and a raspberry tart, if anybody's curious to know. Dr. Lewis had taken a fancy to me: I don't know why, unless it was that he had liked my father; and I'm sure I had taken one to them. But the paint did smell badly, and that's the truth.

In all my days I don't think I ever saw a man so incapable as Dr. Lewis; so helpless as to the common affairs of life. What he would have done without Anne, I know not. He was just fit to sit down and be led like a child; to have said to him—Come here, go there; do this, do the other. Therefore, when he asked me to run in in the morning and see if he wanted anything, I was not surprised. Anne thought he might be glad of my shoulder to lean upon when he walked about the garden.

It was past eleven when I got there, for I had to do an errand first of all for the Squire. Anne was kneeling down in the parlour amidst a lot of small cuttings of plants which she had brought from France. They lay on the carpet on pieces of paper. She wore a fresh white cotton gown, with black dots upon it,

and a black bow at the throat; and she looked nicer than ever.

"Look here, Johnny; I don't know what to do. The labels have all come off, and I can't tell which is which. I suppose I did not fasten them on securely. Sit down—if you can find a chair."

The chairs and tables were strewed with books, most of them French, and other small articles, just unpacked. I did not want a chair, but knelt down beside her, asking if I could help. She said no, and that she hoped to be straight by the morrow. The doctor had stepped out, she did not know where, "to escape the smell of the paint."

I was deep in the pages of one of the books, "Les Contes de ma Bonne," which Anne said was a great favourite of hers, though it was meant for children; and she had her head, as before, bent over the green sprigs and labels, when a shadow, passing the open glass doors, glanced in and halted. I supposed it must be the doctor; but it was Sir Robert Tenby. Up I started; Anne did the same quietly, and quietly invited him in.

"I walked over to see Dr. Lewis, and to ask whether the house requires anything else done to it," he explained. "And I had to come early, as I am leaving the neighbourhood this afternoon."

"Oh, thank you," said Anne, "it is very kind of you to come. Will you please to sit down, sir?" hastily taking the books off a chair. "Papa is out, but I think he will not be long."

"Are you satisfied with the house?" he asked.

"Quite so, sir; and I do not think it wants anything done to it at all. I hope you will not suppose

we shall keep it in this state," she added, rather anxiously. "When things are being unpacked, the rooms are sure to look untidy."

Sir Robert smiled. "You seem very notable, Miss Lewis."

"Oh, I do everything," she answered, smiling back. "There is nobody else."

He had not taken the chair, but went out, saying he should probably meet Dr. Lewis—leaving a message for him, about the house, in case he did not.

"He is your great and grand man of the neighbourhood, is he not, Johnny?" said Anne, as she knelt down on the carpet again.

"Oh, he is grand enough."

"Then don't you think he is, considering that fact, very pleasant and affable? I'm sure he is as simple and free in manners and speech as we are."

"Most grand men—if they are truly great—are that. Your upstarts assume no end of airs."

"I know who will never assume airs, Johnny. He has none in him."

"Who's that?"

"Yourself."

It made me laugh. I had nothing to assume them for.

It was either that afternoon or the following one that Dr. Lewis came up to the Squire and old Coney as they were talking together in the road. He told them that he could not possibly stay in the house; he should be laid up if he did; he must go away until the smell from the paint was gone. That he was looking ill, both saw; and they believed he did not complain without cause.

The question was, where could he go? Mr. Coney hospitably offered him house-room; but the doctor, while thanking him, said the smell might last a long while, and he should prefer to be independent. He had been thinking of going with Anne to Worcester for a time. Did they know of lodgings there?

"Better go to an hotel," said the Squire. "No trouble at an hotel."

"But hotels are not always comfortable. I cannot feel at home in them," argued the poor doctor. "And they cost too much besides."

"You might chance to hit upon lodgings where you'd not be any more comfortable, Lewis. And they'd be very dull for you."

"There's Lake's boarding-house," put in old Coney, while the doctor was looking blank and helpless.

"A boarding-house? Aye, that might do, if it's not a noisy one."

"It's not noisy at all," cried the Squire. "It's uncommonly well conducted: sometimes there are not three visitors in the house. You and Miss Lewis would be comfortable there."

And for Lake's boarding-house Dr. Lewis and Anne took their departure on the very next day. If they had but foreseen the trouble their stay at it would lead to!

Lake's boarding-house stood near the cathedral. A roomy house, with rather shabby furniture in it: but in boarding-houses and lodgings people don't, as a rule, look for gilded chairs and tables. Some years before, Mrs. Lake, the wife of a professional man, and

a gentlewoman, was suddenly left a widow with four infant children, boys, and nothing to keep them upon. What to do she did not know. And it often puzzles me to think what such poor ladies *do* do, left in similar straits.

She had her furniture; and that was about all. Friends suggested that she should take a house in a likely situation, and try for some lady boarders; or perhaps for some of the college boys, whose homes lay at a distance. Not to make too long a story of it, it was what she did do. And she had been in the house ever since, struggling on (for these houses mostly do entail a struggle), sometimes flourishing in numbers, sometimes down in the dumps with empty rooms. But she had managed to bring the children up: the two elder ones were out in the world, the two younger were still in the college school. Mrs. Lake was a meek little woman, ever distracted with practical cares, especially as to stews and gravies: Miss Dinah Lake (her late husband's sister, and a majestic lady of middle age), who lived with her, chiefly saw to the company.

But now, would anybody believe that Dr. Lewis was "that shy," as their maid, Sally, expressed it—or perhaps you would rather call it helpless—that he begged the Squire to let me go with him to Lake's. Otherwise he should be lost, he said; and Anne, accustomed to French ways and habits, could not be of much use to him in a strange boarding-house: Johnny knew the house, and would feel at home there.

When Captain Sanker and his wife (if you have not forgotten them) first came to Worcester, they

stayed at Lake's while fixing on a residence, and that's how we became tolerably well acquainted with the Lakes.

So I went with Dr. Lewis and Anne. It was late in the afternoon when we reached Worcester, close upon the dinner-hour—which was five o'clock, and looked upon as quite a fashionable hour in those days. The dinner-bell had rung, and the company had filed into dinner when we got downstairs.

But there was not much company staying in the house. Mrs. Lake did not appear at dinner, and Miss Dinah Lake took the head of the table. It happened more often than not that Mrs. Lake was in the kitchen, superintending the dishing-up of the dinner and seeing to the ragouts and sauces; especially upon the advent of fresh inmates, when the fare would be unusually plentiful. Mrs. Lake often said she was a "born cook;" which was lucky, as she could not afford to keep first-rate servants.

Miss Dinah sat at the head of the table, in a rustling green gown and primrose satin cap. Having an income of her own she could afford to dress. (Mrs. Lake's best gown was black silk, thin and scanty.) Next to Miss Dinah sat a fair, plump little woman, with round green eyes and a soft voice: at any rate, a soft way of speaking: who was introduced to us as Mrs. Captain Podd. She in turn introduced her daughters, Miss Podd and Miss Fanny Podd: both fair like their mother, and with the same kind of round green eyes. A Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell completed the company; two silent people who seemed to do nothing but eat.

Dr. Lewis sat by Mrs. Captain Podd: and very pleasant and attentive the doctor found her. He was shy as well as helpless; but she talked to him freely in her low soft voice and put him altogether at his ease. My place chanced to be next to Miss Fanny Podd's: and she began at once to put me at my ease, as her mother was putting the doctor.

"You are a stranger here, at the dinner-table," observed Miss Fanny; "but we shall be good friends presently. People in this house soon become sociable."

"I am glad of that."

"I did not quite hear your name. Did you catch mine?—Fanny Podd."

"Yes. Thank you. Mine is Ludlow."

"I suppose you never were at Worcester before?"

"Oh, I know Worcester very well indeed. I live in Worcestershire."

"Why!" cried the young lady, neglecting her soup to stare at me, "we heard you had just come over from living in France. Miss Dinah said so—that old guy at the top, yonder."

"Dr. and Miss Lewis have just come from France. Not I. I know Miss Dinah Lake very well."

"Do you! Don't go and tell her I called her an old guy. Mamma wants to keep in with Miss Dinah, or she might be disagreeable. What a stupid town Worcester is!"

"Perhaps you do not know many people in it."

"We don't know anybody. We had been staying last in a garrison town. That was pleasant: so many nice officers about. You could not go to the window

but there'd be some in sight. Here nobody seems to pass by but a crew of staid old parsons."

"We are near the cathedral; that's why you see so many parsons. Are you going to remain long in Worcester?"

"That's just as the fancy takes mamma. We have been here already six or seven weeks."

"Have you no settled home?"

Miss Fanny Podd pursed up her lips and shook her head. "We like change best. A settled home would be wretchedly dull. Ours was given up when papa died."

Thus she entertained me to the end of dinner. We all left the table together—wine was not in fashion at Lake's. Those who wanted any had to provide it for themselves: but the present company seemed to be satisfied with the home-brewed ale. Mrs. Captain Podd put her arm playfully into that of Dr. Lewis, and said she would show him the way to the drawing-room.

And so it went on all the evening: she making herself agreeable to the doctor: Miss Podd to Anne; Fanny to me. Of course it was highly good-natured of them. Mrs. Podd discovered that the doctor liked backgammon; and she looked for a moment as cross as a wasp on finding there was no board in the house.

"Quite an omission, my dear Miss Dinah," she said, smoothing away the frown with a sweet smile. "I thought a backgammon-board was as necessary to a house as are chairs and tables."

"Mrs. Lake had a board once," said Miss Dinah; "but the boys got possession of it, and somehow it was broken. We have chess—and cribbage."

"Would you like a hand at cribbage, my dear sir?" asked Mrs. Podd of the doctor.

"Don't play it, ma'am," said he.

"Ah"—with a little drawn-out sigh. "Julia, love, would you mind singing one of your quiet songs? Or a duet. Fanny, sweetest, try a quiet duet with your sister. Go to the piano."

If they called the duet quiet, I wondered what they'd call noisy. You might have heard it over at the cathedral. Their playing and singing was of the style known as "showy." Some people admire it: but it is a good thing ear-drums are not easily cracked.

The next day Mrs. Podd made the house a present of a backgammon-board: and in the evening she and Dr. Lewis sat down to play. Our number had decreased, for Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell had left; and Mrs. Lake dined with us, taking the foot of the table. Miss Dinah always, I found, kept the head.

"She is so much better calculated to preside than I am," whispered meek Mrs. Lake to me later in the evening; as, happening to pass the kitchen-door after dinner, I saw her in there, making the coffee. "What should I do without Dinah!"

"But need you come out to make the coffee, Mrs. Lake?"

"My dear, when I leave it to the servants, it is not drinkable. I am rather sorry Mrs. Podd makes a point of having coffee in an evening. Our general rule is to give only tea."

"I'd not give in to Mrs. Podd."

"Well, dear, we like to be accommodating when we can. Being my cousin, she orders things more

freely than our ladies usually do. Dinah calls her exacting; but——"

"Is Mrs. Podd your cousin?" I interrupted, in surprise.

"My first cousin. Did you not know it? Her mother and my mother were sisters."

"The girls don't call you 'aunt.'"

"They do sometimes when we are alone. I suppose they think I am beneath them—keeping a boarding-house."

I had not much liked the Podds at first: as the days went on I liked them less. They were not sincere: I was quite sure of it; Mrs. Podd especially. But the manner in which she had taken Dr. Lewis under her wing was marvellous. He began to think he could not move without her: he was as one who has found a sheet-anchor. She took trouble of all kinds from him: her chief aim seemed to be to make his life pass pleasantly. She'd order a carriage and take him for a drive in it; she'd parade the High Street on his arm; she'd sit with him in the Green within the enclosure, though Miss Dinah told her one day she had not the right of entrance to it; she'd walk him off to inspect the monuments in the cathedral, and talk with him in the cloisters of the old days when Cromwell stabled his horses there. After dinner they would play backgammon till bed time. And with it all, she was so gay and sweet and gentle, that Dr. Lewis thought she must be a very angel come out of heaven.

"Johnny, I don't like her," said Anne to me one day. "She seems to take papa completely out of my hands. She makes him feel quite independent of me."

"You like her as well as I do, Anne."

"This morning I found him in the drawing-room; alone, for a wonder: he was gazing up in his abstracted way, as if wanting to discover what the pinnacles of the cathedral were made of, which look to be so close, you know, from the windows of that room. 'Papa, you are lonely,' I said. 'Would you like to walk out?—or what would you like to do?' 'My dear, Mrs. Podd will see to it all,' he answered; 'don't trouble yourself; I am waiting for her.' It is just as though he had no more need of me."

Anne Lewis turned away to hide her wet eyelashes. For my part, I thought the sooner Mrs. Captain Podd betook herself from Lake's boarding-house, the better. It was too much of a good thing.

That same afternoon I heard some conversation not meant for me. Behind the house was a square patch of ground called a garden, containing a few trees and some sweet herbs. I was sitting on the bench there, underneath the high, old-fashioned dining-room windows, thinking how hot the sun was, wishing for something to do, and wondering when Dr. Lewis meant to send me home. He and Mrs. Podd were out together; Anne was in the kitchen, teaching Mrs. Lake some mysteries of French cookery. Miss Dinah sat in the dining-room, in her spectacles, darning tablecloths.

"Oh, have you come in!" I suddenly heard her say, as the door opened. And it was Mrs. Podd's voice which answered.

"The sun is so very hot: poor dear Dr. Lewis felt quite ill. He is gone up to his room for half an hour to sit quietly in the shade. Where are my girls?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Miss Dinah: and

it struck me that her tone of voice was rather crusty. "Mrs. Podd, I must again ask you when you will let me have some money?"

"As soon as I can," said Mrs. Podd: who seemed, by the sound, to have thrown herself upon a chair, and to be fanning her face with a rustling newspaper.

"But you have said that for some weeks. When is the 'soon' to be?"

"You know I have been disappointed in my remittances. It is really too hot for talking."

"I know that you say you have. But we cannot go on without some money. The expenses of this house are heavy: how are they to be kept up if our guests don't pay us? Indeed you must let me have part of your account, if not all."

"My dear sweet creature, the house is not yours," returned Mrs. Podd, in her most honeyed accents.

"I manage it," said Miss Dinah, "and am responsible for the getting-in of the accounts. You know that our custom is to be paid weekly."

"Exactly, dear Miss Dinah. But I am sure that my cousin, Emma Lake, would not wish to inconvenience me. I am indebted to her; not to you; and I will pay her as soon as I can. My good creature, how *can* you sit stewing over that plain sewing this sultry afternoon!"

"I am obliged to," responded Miss Dinah. "We have not money to spend on new linen: trouble enough, it is, I can assure you, to keep the old decent."

"I should get somebody to help me. That young woman, Miss Lewis, might do it: she seems to have been used to all kinds of work."

"I wish you would shut that door: you have left it

open," retorted Miss Dinah: "I don't like sitting in a draught, though it is hot. And I must beg of you to understand, Mrs. Podd, that we really cannot continue to keep you and your daughters here unless you can manage to give us a little money."

By the shutting of the door and the silence that ensued, it was apparent that Mrs. Podd had departed, leaving Miss Dinah to her table-cloths. But now, this had surprised me. For, to hear Mrs. Captain Podd and her daughters talk, and to see the way in which they dressed, one could not have supposed they were ever at a fault for ready cash.

At the end of ten days I went home. Dr. Lewis no longer wanted me: he had Mrs. Podd. And I think it must have been about ten days after that, that we heard the doctor and Anne were returning. The paint smelt still, but not as badly as before.

They did not come alone. Mrs. Podd and her two daughters accompanied them to spend the day. Mrs. Podd was in a ravishing new toilette; and I hoped Lake's boarding-house had been paid.

Mrs. Podd went into raptures over Maythorn Bank, paint and all. It was the sweetest little place she had ever been in, she said, and some trifling, judicious care would convert it into a paradise.

I know who had the present care; and that was Anne. They got over about twelve o'clock; and as soon as she had seen the ladies' things off, and they comfortably installed in the best parlour, its glass doors standing open to the fragrant flower-beds, she put on a big apron in the kitchen and helped Sally to get the dinner.

"Need you do it, Anne?" I said, running in, having seen her crumbling bread as I passed the window.

"Yes, I must, Johnny. Papa bade me have a nice dinner served to-day: and Sally is inexperienced, you know. She can roast and boil, but she knows nothing about the little dishes he likes. To tell you the truth," added Anne, glancing meaningly into my eyes for a moment, "I would rather be cooking here than talking with them there."

"Are you sorry to leave Worcester?"

"Yes, and no," she answered. "Sorry to leave Mrs. Lake and Miss Dinah, for I like them both: glad to be at home again and to have papa to myself. I shall not cry if we never see Mrs. Podd again. Perhaps I am mistaken; and I'm sure I did not think that the judging of others uncharitably was one of my faults; but I cannot help thinking that she has tried to estrange papa from me. I suppose it is her way: she cannot have any real wish to do it. However, she goes back to-night, and then it will be over."

"Who is at Lake's now?"

"Nobody—except the Podds. I am sorry, for I fear they have some difficulty to make both ends meet."

Was it over! Anne Lewis reckoned without her host.

I was running in to Maythorn Bank the next morning, when I saw the shimmer of Anne's white garden-bonnet and her morning dress amidst the raspberry-bushes, and turned aside to greet her. She had a basin in her hand, picking the fruit, and the hot tears

were running down her cheeks. Conceal her distress she could not; any attempt would have been worse than futile.

"Oh, Johnny, she is going to marry him!" cried she, with a burst of sobs.

"Going to marry him!—who? what?" I asked, taking the basin from her hand: for I declare that the truth did not strike me.

"*She* is. Mrs. Podd. She is going to marry papa."

For a moment she held her face against the apple-tree. The words confounded me. More real grief I had never seen. My heart ached for her.

"Don't think me selfish," she said, turning presently, trying to subdue the sobs and wiping the tears away. "I hope I am not that: or undutiful. It is not for myself that I grieve; indeed it is not; but for him."

I knew that.

"If I could but think it would be for his happiness! But oh, I fear it will not be. Something seems to tell me that it will not. And if—he should be—uncomfortable afterwards—miserable afterwards!—I think the distress would kill me."

"Is it *true*, Anne? How did you hear it?"

"*True!* Too true, Johnny. At breakfast this morning papa said, 'We shall be dull to-day without our friends, Anne.' I told him I hoped not, and that I would go out with him, or read to him, or do anything else he liked: and I reminded him of his small stock of choice books that he used to be so fond of. 'Yes, yes, we shall be very dull, you and I alone in this strange house,' he resumed. 'I have been thinking for some time we should be, Anne, and so I have asked that dear, kind, lively woman to come to us for

good.' I did not understand him; I did not indeed, Johnny; and papa went on to explain. 'You must know that I allude to Mrs. Podd, Anne,' he said. 'When I saw her so charmed with this house yesterday, and we were talking about my future loneliness in it—and she lamented it, even to tears—one word led to another, and I felt encouraged to venture to ask her to share it and be my wife. And so, my dear, it is all settled; and I trust it will be for the happiness of us all. She is a most delightful woman, and will make the sunshine of any home.' I wish I could think it!" concluded Anne.

"No, don't take the basin," I said, as she went to do so. "I'll finish picking the raspberries. What are they for?"

"A pudding. Papa said he should like one."

"Why could not Sally pick them? Country girls are used to the sun."

"Sally is busy. Papa bade her clear out that room where our boxes were put: we shall want all the rooms now. Oh, Johnny, I wish we had not left France! Those happy days will never come again."

Was the doctor going into his dotage? The question crossed my mind. It might never have occurred to *me;* but one day at Worcester Miss Dinah had asked it in my hearing. I felt very uncomfortable, could not think of anything soothing to say to Anne, and went on picking the raspberries.

"How many do you want? Are these enough?"

"Yes," she answered, looking at the lot. "I must fill the basin up with currants."

We were bending over a currant-bush, Anne holding up a branch and I stripping it, when footsteps on

the path close by made us both look up hastily. There stood Sir Robert Tenby. He stared at the distress on Anne's face, which was too palpable to be concealed, and asked without ceremony what was amiss.

It was the last feather that broke the camel's back. These words from a stranger, and his evident concern, put the finishing touch to Anne's state. She burst into more bitter tears than she had yet shed, and for a minute sobbed piteously.

"Is it any trouble that I can help you out of?" asked Sir Robert, in the kindest tones, feeling, no doubt, as sorry as he looked. "Oh, my dear young lady, don't give way like this!"

Touched by his sympathy, her heart seemed to open to him: perhaps she had need of finding consolation somewhere. Drying her tears, Anne told her story simply: commenting on it as she had commented to me.

"It is for my father's sake that I grieve, sir; that I fear. I feel sure Mrs. Podd will not make him really happy."

"Well, well, we must hope for the best," spoke Sir Robert, who looked a little astonished at hearing the nature of the grievance, and perhaps thought Anne's distress more exaggerated than it need have been. "Dr. Lewis wrote to me last night about some alteration he wants to make in the garden; I am come to speak to him of it."

"Alteration in the garden!" mechanically repeated Anne. "I have heard nothing about it."

He passed into the house to the doctor. We picked on at the currants, and then took them into the kitchen. Anne sat down on a chair to strip them

from their stalks. Presently we saw Sir Robert and the doctor at one end of the garden, the latter drawing boundaries round a corner with his walking-stick.

"Oh, I know," exclaimed Anne. "Yesterday Mrs. Podd suggested that a summer-house in that spot would be a delightful improvement. But I never, never could have supposed papa meant to act upon the suggestion."

Just so. Dr. Lewis wished to erect a summer-house of wood and trellis-work, but had not liked to do it without first speaking to his landlord.

As the days went on, Anne grew to feel somewhat reassured. She was very busy, for all kinds of preparations had to be made in the house, and the wedding was to take place at once.

"I think, perhaps, I took it up in a wrong light, Johnny," she said to me one day, when I went in and found her sewing at some new curtains. "I hope I did. It must have been the suddenness of the news, I suppose, and that I was so very unprepared for it."

"How do you mean?" In what wrong light?"

"Nobody seems to think ill of it, or to foresee cause for apprehension. I am so glad. I don't think I ever can much like her: but if she makes papa happy, it is all I ask."

"Who has been talking about it?"

"Herbert Tanerton, for one. He saw Mrs. Podd at Worcester last week, and thought her charming. The very woman, he said, to do papa good; lively and full of resource. So it may all be for the best."

I should as soon have expected an invitation to the moon as to the wedding. But I got it. Dr. Lewis, left to himself, was feeling helpless again, and took

me with him to Worcester on the eve of the happy day. We put up at the Bell Hotel for the night; but Anne went direct to Lake's boarding-house. I ran down there in the evening.

Whether an inkling of the coming wedding had got abroad, I can't say; it was to be kept private, and had been, so far as anybody knew: but Lake's house was full, not a room to be had in it for love or money. Anne was put in a sleeping-closet two yards square.

"It is not our fault," spoke Miss Dinah, openly. "We were keeping a room for Miss Lewis; but on Monday last when a stranger came, wanting to be taken in, Mrs. Podd told us Miss Lewis was going to the hotel with her father."

"My dear love, I thought you were," chimed in Mrs. Podd, as she patted Anne on the shoulder. "I must have mis-read a passage in your dear papa's letter, and so caught up the misapprehension. Never mind: you shall dress in my room if your own is not large enough. And I am sure all young ladies ought to be obliged to me, for the new inmate is a delightful man. My daughters find him charming."

"The room is quite large enough, thank you," replied Anne, meekly.

"Do you approve of the wedding, Miss Dinah?" I asked her later, when we were alone in the dining-room. "Do you like it?"

Miss Dinah, who was counting a heap of glasses on the sideboard that the maid had just washed and brought in, counted to the end, and then began upon the spoons.

"It is the only way we can keep our girls in check,"

observed she; "otherwise they'd break and lose all before them. I know how many glasses have been used at table, consequently how many go out to be washed, and the girl has to bring that same number in, or explain the reason why. As to the spoons, they get thrown away with the dishwater and sometimes into the fire. If they were silver it would be all the same."

"Do you like the match, Miss Dinah?"

"Johnny Ludlow," she said, turning round to face me, "we make a point in this house of not expressing our likes and dislikes. Our position is peculiar, you know. When people have come to years of discretion, and are of the age that Mrs. Podd is, not to speak of Dr. Lewis's, we must suppose them to be capable of judging and acting for themselves. We have not helped on the match by so much as an approving word or look: on the other hand, it has not lain in our duty or in our power to retard it."

Which was, of course, good sense. But for all her caution, I fancied she could have spoken against it, had she chosen.

A trifling incident occurred to me in going back to the Bell. Rushing round the corner into Broad Street, a tall, well-dressed man, sauntering on before me, suddenly turned on his heel, and threw away his cigar sideways. It caught the front of my shirt. I flung it off again; but not before it had burnt a small hole in the linen.

"I beg your pardon," said the smoker, in a courteous voice—and there was no mistaking him for anything but a gentleman. "I am very sorry. It was frightfully careless of me."

"Oh, it is nothing; don't think about it," I answered, making off at full speed.

St. Michael's Church stood in a nook under the cathedral walls: it is taken down now. It was there that the wedding took place. Dr. Lewis arrived at it more like a baby than a bridegroom, helpless and nervous to a painful degree. But Mrs. Podd made up for his deficiencies in her grand self-possession; her white bonnet and nodding feather seemed to fill the church. Anne wore grey silk; Julia and Fanny Podd some shining pink stuff that their petticoats could be seen through. Poor Anne's tears were dropping during the service; she kept her head bent down to hide them.

"Look up, Anne," I said from my place close to her. "Take courage."

"I can't help it, indeed, Johnny," she whispered. "I wish I could. "I'm sure I'd not throw a damp on the general joy for the world."

The wedding-party was a very small one indeed; just ourselves and a stern-looking gentleman, who was said to be a lawyer-cousin of the Podds, and to come from Birmingham. All the people staying at Lake's had flocked into the church to look on.

"Pray take my arm. Allow me to lead you out. I see how deeply you are feeling this."

The ceremony seemed to be over almost as soon as it was begun—perhaps the parson, remembering the parties had both been married before, cut it short. And it was in the slight bustle consequent upon its termination that the above words, in a low, tender, and most considerate tone, broke upon my ear. Where had I heard the voice before?

Turning hastily round, I recognised the stranger of the night before. It was to Anne he had spoken, and he had already taken her upon his arm. Her head was bent still; the rebellious tears would hardly be kept back; and a sweet compassion sat on every line of his handsome features as he gazed down at her.

"Who is he?" I asked of Fanny Podd, as he walked forward with Anne.

"Mr. Angerstyne—the most fascinating man I ever saw in my life. The Lakes could not have taken him in, but for mamma's inventing that little fable of Anne's going with old Lewis to the Bell. Trust mamma for not letting us two girls lose a chance," added free-speaking Fanny. "I may take your arm, I suppose, Johnny Ludlow."

And after a plain breakfast in private, which included only the wedding-party, Dr. and Mrs. Lewis departed for Cheltenham.

PART THE SECOND.

"JOHNNY, what can I do? What do you *think* I can do?"

In the pretty grey silk that she had worn at her father's wedding, and with a whole world of perplexity in her soft brown eyes, Anne Lewis stood by me, and whispered the question. As soon as the bride and bridegroom had driven off, Anne was to depart for Maythorn Bank, with Julia and Fanny Podd; all three of them to remain there for the few days that Dr. and Mrs. Lewis purposed to be away. But now, no sooner had the sound of the bridal wheels died on our ears, and Anne had suggested that they should get ready for their journey home, than the two young ladies burst into a laugh, and said, *Did* she think they were going off to that dead-and-alive place! Not if they knew it. And, giving her an emphatic nod to prove they meant what they said, they waltzed to the other end of the room in their shining pink dresses to talk to Mr. Angerstyne.

Consternation sat in every line of Anne's face. "I cannot go there by myself, or stay there by myself," she said to me. "These things are not done in France."

No: though Maythorn Bank was her own home, and though she was as thoroughly English as a girl can be, it could not be done. French customs and

ideas did not permit it, and she had been brought up in them. It was certainly not nice behaviour of the girls. They should have objected before their mother left.

"*I* don't know what you can do, Anne. Better ask Miss Dinah."

"Not go with you, after the arrangements are made—and your servant Sally is expecting you all!" cried Miss Dinah Lake. "Oh, you must be mistaken," she added; and went up to talk to them. Julia only laughed.

"Go to be buried alive at Maythorn Bank as long as mamma chooses to stay away!" she cried. "You'll not get either of us to do anything of the kind, Miss Dinah."

"Mrs. Podd—I mean Mrs. Lewis—will be back to join you there in less than a week," said Miss Dinah.

"Oh, will she, though! You don't know mamma. She may be off to Paris and fifty other places before she turns her head homewards again. Anne Lewis can go home by herself, if she wants to go: I and Fanny mean to stay with you, Miss Dinah."

So Anne had to stay also. She sat down and wrote two letters: one to Sally, saying their coming home was delayed; the other to Dr. Lewis, asking what she was to do.

"And the gain is mine," observed Mr. Angerstyne. "What would the house have been without you?"

He appeared to speak to the girls generally. But his eyes and his smile evidently were directed to Anne. She saw it too, and blushed. Blushed! when she had not yet known him four-and-twenty hours.

But he was just the fellow for a girl to fall in love with—and no disparagement to her to say so.

"Who is he?" I that evening asked Miss Dinah.

"A Mr. Angerstyne," she answered. "I don't know much of him, except that he is an independent gentleman with a beautiful estate in Essex, and a fashionable man. I see what you are thinking, Johnny: that it is curious a man of wealth and fashion should be staying at Lake's boarding-house. But Mr. Angerstyne came over from Malvern to see Captain Bristow, the old invalid, who keeps his room upstairs, and when here the Captain persuaded him to stay for a day or two, if we could give him a room. That's how it was. Captain Bristow leaves us soon, and I suppose Mr. Angerstyne will be leaving too."

I had expected to go home the following day; but that night up came two of the young Sankers, Dan and King, and said I was to go and stay a bit with them. Leave to do so was easily had from home; for just as our school at old Frost's was re-assembling, two boys who had stayed the holidays were taken with bad throats, and we were not to go back till goodness knew when. Tod, who was on a visit in Gloucestershire, thought it would be Michaelmas.

Back came letters from Cheltenham. Mrs. Lewis told her girls they might remain at Worcester if they liked. And Dr. Lewis wrote to Anne, saying she must not go home alone, and he enclosed a note to Mrs. Lake, asking her to be so kind as to take care of his daughter.

After that we had a jolly time. The Sankers and Lakes amalgamated well, and were always at one

another's houses. This does not apply to Mrs. Lake and Miss Dinah: as Miss Dinah put it, they had no time for gadding down to Sankers'. But Mr. Angerstyne (who had not left) grew quite familiar there; the Sankers, who never stood on the slightest ceremony, making no stranger of him. Captain Sanker discovered that two or three former naval chums of his were known to Mr. Angerstyne; one dead old gentleman in particular, who had been his bosom friend. This was quite enough. Mr. Angerstyne had, so to say, the key of the house given him, and went in and out of it at will.

Everybody liked Mr. Angerstyne. And for all the pleasurable excursions that now fell to our lot, we were indebted to him. Without being ostentatious, he opened his purse freely; and there was a delicacy in his manner of doing it that prevented its being felt. On the plea of wanting, himself, to see some noted spot or place in the neighbourhood, he would order a large post-carriage from the Star or the Crown, and invite as many as it would hold to accompany him, and bring baskets of choice fruit, or dainties from the pastry-cook's to regale us on. Or he would tell the Sankers that King looked delicate: poor lame King, who was to die ere another year had flown. Down would come the carriage, ostensibly to take King for a drive; and a lot of us reaped the benefit. Mrs. Sanker was always of the party: without a chaperon, the young ladies could not have gone. Generally speaking the Miss Podds would come—*they* took care of that: and Anne Lewis always came—which I think Mr. Angerstyne took care of. The golden page of life was opening for Anne Lewis: she seemed to be enter-

ing on an Elysian pathway, every step of which was strewn with flowers.

One day we went to Holt Fleet. The carriage came down to the Sankers' in the morning, Mr. Angerstyne in it, and the Captain stepped out of doors, his face beaming, to see the start. Once in a way he would be of the party himself, but not often. Mr. Angerstyne handed Mrs. Sanker in, and then called out for me. I held back, feeling uncomfortable at being always taken, and knowing that Fred and Dan thought me selfish for it. But it was of no use: Mr. Angerstyne had a way of carrying out his own will.

"Get up on the box, Johnny," he said to me. And, close upon my heels, wanting to share the box with me, came Dan Sanker. Mr. Angerstyne pulled him back.

"Not you, Dan. I shall take King."

"King has been ever so many times—little wretch!" grumbled Dan. "It's my turn. It's not fair, Mr. Angerstyne."

"You, Dan, and Fred, and Toby, all the lot of you, shall have a carriage to yourselves for a whole day if you like, but King goes with me," said Mr. Angerstyne, helping the lad up.

He got in himself, took his seat by Mrs. Sanker, and the post-boy touched up his horses. Mrs. Sanker, mildly delighted, for she liked these drives, sat in her ordinary costume: a fancy shawl of some thick kind of silk crape, all the colours of the rainbow blended into its pattern, and a black velvet bonnet with a turned-up brim and a rose in it, beneath which her light hair hung down in loose curls.

We stopped at Lake's boarding-house to take up

the three girls; who got in, and sat on the seat opposite Mrs. Sanker and Mr. Angerstyne; and then the post-boy started for Holt Fleet. "The place is nothing," observed Captain Sanker, who had suggested it as an easy, pleasant drive to Mr. Angerstyne; "but the inn is comfortable, and the garden's nice to sit or stroll in."

We reached Holt Fleet at one o'clock. The first thing Mr. Angerstyne did was to order luncheon, anything they could conveniently give us, and to serve it in the garden. It proved to be ham and eggs; first-rate; we were all hungry, and he bade them keep on frying till further orders. At which the girl who waited on us laughed, as she drew the corks of some bottled perry.

I saw a bit of by-play later. Strolling about to digest the ham and eggs, some in one part of the grounds, which in places had a wild and picturesque aspect, some in another, Mr. Angerstyne suddenly laid hold of Anne, as if to save her from falling. She was standing in that high narrow pathway that is perched up aloft and looks so dangerous, steadying herself by a tree, and bending cautiously forwards to look down. The path may be gone now. The features of the whole place may be altered; perhaps even done away with altogether; for I am writing of years and years ago. He stole up and caught her by the waist.

"Oh, Mr. Angerstyne!" she exclaimed, blushing and starting.

"Were you going to take a leap?"

"No, no," she smiled. "Would it kill me if I did?"

"Suppose I let you go—and send you over to try it?"

Ah, he would not do that. He was holding her all too safely. Anne made an effort to free herself; but her eyelids drooped over her tell-tale eyes, her all-conscious face betrayed what his presence was to her.

"How beautiful the river is from this, as we look up it!" she exclaimed.

"More than beautiful."

Julia Podd rushed up to mar the harmony. Never does a fleeting moment of this kind set in but somebody does mar it. Julia flirted desparately with Mr. Angerstyne.

"Mr. Angerstyne, I have been looking for you everywhere. Mrs. Sanker wants to know if you will take us for a row on the water. The inn has a nice boat."

"Mrs. Sanker does!" he exclaimed. "With pleasure. Are you fond of the water, Miss Lewis?"

Anne made no particular reply. She stood at a little distance now, apparently looking at the view; but I thought she wanted to hide her hot cheeks. Mr. Angerstyne caught her hand in his, playfully put his other hand within Miss Julia's arm, and so piloted them down. Ah, he might flirt back again with Julia Podd, and did; with Fanny also; but it was not to them his thoughts were given.

"Go on the water!" said Mrs. Sanker, who was sitting under the shade of the trees, repeating one of her favourite ballads to King in a see-saw tone. "*I!* Julia Podd must have misunderstood me. To go on the water might be nice for those who would like it, I said. I don't."

"Will you go?" asked Mr. Angerstyne, turning to Anne.

Anne shook her head, confessing herself too much of a coward. She had never been on any water in her life until when crossing over from France, and never wished to be. And Mr. Angerstyne ungallantly let the boat alone, though Julia and Fanny told him they adored the water.

We sat down in the shade by Mrs. Sanker; some on the bench by her side, some on the grass at her feet, and she recited for us the time-worn ballad she had begun for King: just as the following year she would recite things to us, as already told of, sitting on the floor beam of the turret-room. It was called "Lord Thomas." Should you like to hear it.

Lord Thomas, he was a bold forester,
And a keeper of the king's deer;
Fair Ellenor, she was a fair young lady,
Lord Thomas he loved her dear.

"Come, read me a riddle, dear mother," said he,
"And riddle us both as one:
Whether fair Ellen shall be mine—
Or to bring the brown girl home?"

"The brown girl she hath both houses and lands,
Fair Ellenor, she has none:
Therefore I'd advise thee, on my blessing,
To bring the brown girl home."

Then he decked himself and he dressed himself,
And his merry men, all in green:
And as he rode through the town with them
Folks took him to be some king.

When he came to fair Ellenor's bower
So boldly he did ring;
There was none so ready as fair Ellen herself
To loose Lord Thomas in.

"What news, what news, Lord Thomas,
What news have you brought unto me?"
"I'm come to invite you to my wedding;
And that is bad news for thee."

"Oh, now forbid," fair Ellenor said,
"That any such thing should be done:
For I thought to have been the bride myself,
And that you would have been the bridegroom.

"Come, read me a riddle, dear mother," said she,
"And riddle us both as one:
Whether I shall go to Lord Thomas's wedding,
Or whether I shall tarry at home?"

"There's one may be thy friend, I know;
But twenty will be thy foe:
Therefore I charge thee, on my blessing,
To Lord Thomas's wedding don't go."

"There's one will be my friend, I know,
Though twenty should be my foe:
Betide me life, or betide me death,
To Lord Thomas's wedding I go."

Then she went up into her chamber
And dressed herself all in green:
And when she came downstairs again,
They thought it must be some queen.

When she came to Lord Thomas's castle
So nobly she did ring:
There was none so ready as Lord Thomas himself
To loose this lady in.

Then he took her by her lily-white hand
And led her across the hall;
And he placed her on the dais,
Above the ladies all.

"Is this your bride, Lord Thomas?
I think she looks wondrous brown:
You might have had as fair a young maiden
As ever trod English ground."

"Despise her not," said Lord Thomas;
"Despise her not unto me;
I love thy little finger, Ellen,
Better than her whole body."

The brown girl, having a knife in her hand,
Which was both keen and sharp,
Between the long ribs and the short,
She pierced fair Ellenor's heart.

"Oh, what's the matter?" Lord Thomas said,
"I think you look pale and wan:
You used to have as fine a colour
As ever the sun shone on."

"What, are you blind, now, Thomas?
Or can't you very well see?
Oh, can't you see, and oh, can't you see my own heart's blood
Run trickling down to my knee?"

Then Lord Thomas, he took the brown girl by the hand,
And led her across the hall;
And he took his own bride's head off her shoulders,
And dashed it against the wall.

Then Lord Thomas, he put the sword to the ground,
The point against his heart:
So there was an end of those three lovers,
So sadly they did part!

* * * * * * *

Upon fair Ellenor's grave grew a rose,
And upon Lord Thomas's a briar:
And there they twixed and there they twined, till they came to
the steeple-top;
That all the world might plainly see, true love is never forgot.

"Oh, how delightful these old ballads are!" cried Anne, as Mrs. Sanker finished.

"Delightful!" retorted Julia Podd. "Why, they are full of queer phrases and outrageous metre and grammar!"

"My dears, it is, I suppose, how people wrote and spoke in those old days," said Mrs. Sanker, who had given great force to every turn of the song, and seemed to feel its disasters as much as though she had been fair Ellen herself.

"Just so," put in Mr. Angerstyne. "The world was not full of erudition then, as it is now, and we accept the language—ay, and like it, too—as that of a past day. To me, these old ballads are wonderful: every one has a life's romance in it."

And that day at Holt Fleet, the only time I, Johnny Ludlow, ever saw the place, lives in my memory as a romance now.

As the days went on, there could be no mistake made by the one or two of us who kept our eyes open. I mean, as to Mr. Angerstyne's liking for Anne Lewis, and the reciprocal feelings he had awakened. With her, it had been a case of love at first sight; or nearly so. And that, if you may believe the learned in the matter, is the only love deserving the name. Perhaps it had been so with him: I don't know.

Three parts of their time they talked together in French, for Mr. Angerstyne spoke it well. And that vexed Julia and Fanny Podd; who called themselves good French scholars, but who somehow failed to

understand. "They talk so fast; they do it on purpose," grumbled Fanny. At German Mr. Angerstyne was not apt. He spoke it a very little, and Anne would laughingly correct his mistakes, and repeat the German words slowly over, that he might catch the accent, causing us no end of fun. That was Anne's time of day, as Fanny Podd expressed it; but when it came to the musical evenings, Anne was nowhere. The other two shone like the stars then, and did their best to monopolise Mr. Angerstyne.

That a fine gentleman, rich, and a man of the great world, should stay dawdling on at a boarding-house, puzzled Miss Dinah, who knew what was what. Of course it was no business of hers; she and Mrs. Lake were only too glad to have one who paid so liberally. He would run upstairs to sit with Captain Bristow; and twice a week he went to Malvern, sometimes not getting back in time for dinner.

The college school had begun again, and I was back at Lake's. For Tom and Alfred Lake, who had been away, were at home now; and nothing would do but I must come to their house before I went home—to which I was daily expecting a summons. As to the bride and bridegroom, we thought they meant to remain away for good; weeks had elapsed since their departure. Nobody regretted that: Julia and Fanny Podd considered Maythorn Bank the fag-end of the world, and hoped they might never be called to it. And Anne, living in the Elysian Fields, did not care to leave them for the dreary land outside their borders.

One evening we were invited to a tea-dinner at Captain Sanker's. The Miss Podds persisted in calling

it a soirée. It turned out to be a scrambling kind of entertainment, and must have amused Mr. Angerstyne. Biddy had poured the bowl of sweet custard over the meat patties by mistake, and put salt on the open tartlets instead of sugar. It seemed nothing but fun to us all. The evening, with its mistakes, and its laughter, and its genuine hospitality, came to an end, and we started to go home under the convoy of Mr. Angerstyne, all the Sanker boys, except Toby, attending us. It was a lovely moonlight night; Mrs. Lake, who had come in at the tail of the soirée to escort the girls home, remarked that the moon was never brighter.

"Why, just look there!" she exclaimed, as we turned up Edgar Street, intending to take that and the steps homewards; "the Tower gates are open!" For it was the custom to close the great gates of Edgar Tower at dusk.

"Oh, I know," cried Fred Sanker. "The sub-dean gives a dinner to-night; and the porter has left the gates wide for the carriages. Who is good for a race round the Green?"

It seemed that we all were, for the whole lot of us followed him in, leaving Mrs. Lake calling after us in consternation. The old Tower porter, thinking the Green was being charged by an army of ill-doers, rushed out of his den, shouting to us to come back.

Much we heeded him! Counting the carriages (three of them) waiting at the sub-dean's door, we raced onwards at will, some hither, some yonder. King went back to Mrs. Lake. The evening's coolness felt delicious after the hot and garish day; the moonlight brought out the lights and shades of the

queer old houses and the older cathedral. Collecting ourselves together presently, at Fred Sanker's whoop, Mr. Angerstyne and Anne were missing.

"They've gone to look at the Severn, I think," said Dan Sanker. "I heard him tell her it was worth looking at in the moonlight."

Yes, they were there. He had Anne's arm tucked up under his, and his head bent over her that she might catch his whispers. They turned round at hearing our footsteps.

"Indeed we must go home, Mr. Angerstyne," said Julia Podd, who had run down after me, and spoke crossly. "The college clock is chiming the quarter to eleven. There's Mrs. Lake waiting for us under the Tower!"

"Is it so late?" he answered her, in a pleasant voice. "Time flies quickly in the moonlight: I've often remarked it."

Walking forward, he kept by the side of Julia; Anne and I followed together. Some of the boys were shouting themselves hoarse from the top of the ascent, wanting to know if we were lost.

"Is it all settled, Anne?" I asked her, jestingly, dropping my voice.

"Is what settled?" she returned. But she understood; for her face looked like a rose in the moonlight.

"You know. *I* can see, if the others can't. And if it makes you happy, Anne, I am very glad of it."

"Oh Johnny, I hope—I hope no one else does see. But indeed you are making more of it than it deserves."

"What does he say to you?"

"He has not *said* anything. So you see, Johnny, you may be quite mistaken."

It was all the same: if he had not said anything yet, there could be no question that he meant soon to say it. We were passing the old elm trees just then; the moonlight, flickering through them on Anne's face, lighted up the sweet hope that lay on it.

"Sometimes I think if—if papa should not approve of it!" she whispered.

"But he is sure to approve of it. One cannot help liking Mr. Angerstyne: and his position is undeniable."

The sub-dean's dinner guests were gone, the three carriages bowling them away; and the porter kept up a fire of abuse as he waited to watch us through the little postern-door. The boys, being college boys, returned his attack with interest. Wishing the Sankers good-night, who ran straight down Edgar Street on their way home, we turned off up the steps, and found Mrs. Lake standing patiently at her door. I saw Mr. Angerstyne catch Anne's hand for a moment in his, under cover of our entrance.

The morning brought news. Dr. and Mrs. Lewis were on their way to Maythorn Bank, expected to reach it that evening, and the young ladies were bidden to depart for it on the following day.

A wonderful change had taken place in Dr. Lewis. If they had doubted before whether the Doctor was not going into his dotage they could not doubt longer, for he was decidedly *in* it. A soft-speaking, mooning man, now; utterly lost in the shadow cast by his

wife's importance. She appeared to be smiling in face and gentle in accent as ever, but she over-ruled every soul in the house: nobody but herself had a will in it. What little strength of mind he might have had, his new bride had taken out of him.

Anne did not like it. Hitherto mistress of all things under her father, she found herself passed over as a nonentity. She might not express an opinion, or hazard a wish. "My dear, *I* am here now," Mrs. Lewis said to her once or twice emphatically. Anne was deposed; her reign was over.

One little thing, that happened, she certainly did not like. Though humble-minded, entirely un-self-asserting, sweet tempered and modest as a girl should be, she did not like this. Mrs. Lewis sent out invitations for dinner to some people in the neighbourhood, strangers to her until then; the table was too full by one, and she had told Anne that she could not sit down. It was too bad; especially as Julia and Fanny Podd filled two of the more important places, with bunches of fresh sweet-peas in their hair.

"Besides," Mrs. Lewis had said to Anne in the morning, "we must have a French side-dish or two, and there's nobody but you understands the making of them."

Whether the having to play the host was too much for him, or that he did not like the slight put upon his daughter, before the dinner was half over, the Doctor fell asleep. He could not be roused from it. Herbert Tanerton, who had sat by Mrs. Lewis's side to say grace, thought it was not sleep but unconsciousness. Between them, the company carried him

into the other room; and Anne, hastening to send in her French dishes, ran there to attend upon him.

"I hope and trust there's nothing amiss with his heart," said old Coney doubtfully, in the bride's ear.

"My dear Mr. Coney, his heart is as strong as mine—believe me," affirmed Mrs. Lewis, flicking some crumbs off the front of her wedding dress.

"I hope it is, I'm sure," repeated Coney. "I don't like that blue tinge round his lips."

They went back to the dinner-table when Dr. Lewis revived. Anne remained kneeling at his feet, gently chafing his hands.

"What's the matter?" he cried, staring at her like a man bewildered. "What are you doing?"

"Dear papa, you fell asleep over your dinner, and they could not wake you. Do you feel ill?"

"Where am I?" he asked, as if he were speaking out of a dream. And she told him what she could. But she had not heard those suspicious words of old Coney's.

It was some minutes yet before he got much sense into him, or seemed fully to understand. He fell back in the chair then, with a deep sigh, keeping Anne's hand in his.

"Shall I get you anything, papa?" she asked. "You had eaten scarcely any dinner, they say. Would you like a little drop of brandy-and-water?"

"Why was not your dress ready?"

"My dress!" exclaimed Anne.

"She said so to me, when I asked why you did not come to table. Not made, or washed, or ironed; or something."

Anne felt rather at sea. "There's nothing the

matter with my dresses, papa," she said. "But never mind them—or me. Will you go back to dinner? Or shall I get you anything here?"

"I don't want to go back; I don't want anything," he answered. "Go and finish yours, my dear."

"I have had mine," she said with a faint blush. For indeed her dinner had consisted of some bread-and-butter in the kitchen, eaten over the French stew-pans. Dr. Lewis was gazing out at the trees, and seemed to be in thought.

"Perhaps you stayed away from home rather too long, papa," she suggested. "You are not accustomed to travelling; and I think you are not strong enough for it. You looked very worn when you first came home; worn and ill."

"Ay," he answered. "I told her it did not do for me; but she laughed. It was nothing but a whirl, you know. And I only want to be quiet."

"It is very quiet here, dear papa, and you will soon feel stronger. You shall sit out of doors in the sun of a day, and I will read to you. I wish you would let me get you——"

"Hush, child. I'm thinking."

With his eyes still fixed on the out-of-door landscape, he sat stroking Anne's hand abstractedly. Nothing broke the silence, save the faint clatter of knives and forks from the dining-room.

"Mind, Anne, she made me do it," he suddenly exclaimed.

"Made you do what, papa?"

"And so, my dear, if I am not allowed to remedy it, and you feel disappointed, you must think as lightly of it as you are able: and don't blame me more than

you can help. I'll alter it again if I can, be sure of that; but I don't have a moment to myself, and at times it seems that she's just my keeper."

Anne answered soothingly that all he did must be right, but had no time to say more, for Mr. Coney, stealing in on tip-toe from the dining-room, came to see after the patient. Anne had not the remotest idea what it was that the Doctor alluded to; but she had caught up one idea with dread of heart—that the marriage had not increased his happiness. Perhaps had marred it.

Maythorn Bank did not suit Mrs. Lewis. Ere she had been two weeks at it, she found it insufferably dull; not to be endured at any price. There was no fashion thereabouts, and not much visiting; the neighbours were mostly simple, unpretending people, quite different from the style of company met with in garrison towns and pump-rooms. Moreover the few people who might have visited Mrs. Lewis, did not seem to take to her, or to remember that she was there. This did not imply discourtesy: Dr. Lewis and his daughter had just come into the place, strangers, so to say, and people could not practically recollect all at once that Maythorn Bank was inhabited. Where was the use of dressing up in peacock's plumes if nobody came to see her? The magnificent wardrobe, laid in during her recent honey-moon, seemed as good as wasted.

"I can't stand this!" emphatically cried Mrs. Lewis one day to her daughters. And Anne, chancing to enter the room unexpectedly at the moment, heard her say it, and wondered what it meant.

That same afternoon, Dr. Lewis had another attack. Anne found him sitting beside the pear-tree insensible,

his head hanging over the arm of the bench. Travelling had not brought this second attack on, that was certain; for no man could be leading a more quiet, moping life than he was. Save that he listened now and then to some book, read by Anne, he had no amusement whatever, no excitement; he might have sat all day long with his mouth closed, for all there was to open it for. Mrs. Lewis's powers of fascination, that she had exercised so persistently upon him as Mrs. Podd, seemed to have deserted her for good. She passed her hours gaping, sleeping, complaining, hardly replying to a question of his, if he by chance asked her one. Even the soft sweet voice that had charmed the world mostly degenerated now into a croak or a scream. Those very mild, not-say-bo-to-a-goose voices are sometimes only kept for public life.

"I shall take you off to Worcester," cried Mrs. Lewis to him, when he came out of his insensibility. "We will start as soon as breakfast's over in the morning."

Dr. Lewis began to tremble. "I don't want to go to Worcester," said he. "I want to stay here."

"But staying here is not good for you, my dear. You'll be better at Mrs. Lake's. It is the remains of this paint that is making you ill. I can smell it still quite strongly, and I decidedly object to stay in it."

"My dear, you can go; I shall not wish to prevent you. But, as to the paint, I don't smell it at all now. You can all go. Anne will take care of me."

"My dear Dr. Lewis, do you think I would leave you behind me? It *is* the paint. And you shall see a doctor at Worcester."

He said he was a doctor himself, and did not need

another; he once more begged to be left at home in peace. All in vain: Mrs. Lewis announced her decision to the household; and Sally, whose wits had been well-nigh scared away by the doings and the bustle of the new inmates, was gladdened by the news that they were about to take their departure.

"Pourtant si le ciel nous protège,
Peut-être encore le reverrai-je."

These words, the refrain of an old French song, were being sung by Anne Lewis softly in the gladness of her heart, as she bent over the trunk she was packing. To be going back to Worcester, where *he* was, seemed to her like going to paradise.

"What are you doing *that* for?"

The emphatic question, spoken in evident surprise, came from her stepmother. The chamber-door was open; Mrs. Lewis had chanced to look in as she passed.

"What are you doing that for?" she stopped to ask. Anne ceased her song at once and rose from her knees. She really did not know what it was that had elicited the sharp query—unless it was the singing.

"You need not pack your own things. You are not going to Worcester. It is intended that you shall remain here and take care of the house and of Sally."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Lewis, I could not stay here alone," cried Anne, a hundred thoughts rushing tumultuously into her mind. "It could not be."

"Not stay here alone! Why, what is to hinder it? Do you suppose you would get run away with? Now, my dear, we will have no trouble, if you please. You will stay at home like a good girl—therefore you may unpack your box."

Anne went straight to her father, and found him with Herbert Tanerton. He had walked over from Timberdale to inquire after the Doctor's health.

"Could this be, papa?" she said. "That I am to be left alone here while you stay at Worcester?"

"Don't talk nonsense, child," was the peevish answer. "My belief is that you dream dreams, Anne, and then fancy them realities."

"But Mrs. Lewis tells me that I am not to go to Worcester—that I am to stay at home," persisted Anne. And she said it before Mrs. Lewis: who had come into the room then, and was shaking hands with the parson.

"I think, love, it will be so much better for dear Anne to remain here and see to things," she said, in that sweet company-voice of hers.

"No," dissented the Doctor, plucking up the courage to be firm. "If Anne stays here, I shall stay. I'm sure I'd be thankful if you'd let us stay: we should get a bit of peace and quiet."

She did not make a fuss before the parson. Perhaps she saw that to hold out might cause some unprofitable commotion. Treating Anne to a beaming smile, she remarked that her dear papa's wish was of course law, and bade her run and finish her packing.

And when they arrived the next day at Lake's, and Anne heard that Henry Angerstyne was in truth still there and knew that she should soon be in his presence, it did indeed seem to her that she had stepped into paradise. She was alone when he entered. The others had sought their respective chambers, leaving Anne to gather up their packages and follow, and she had her bonnet untied and her arms full of things

when he came into the room. Paradise! she might have experienced some bliss in her life, but none like unto this. Her veins were tingling, her heart-blood leaping. How well he looked! how noble! how superior to other men! As he caught her hand in his, and bent to whisper his low words of greeting, she could scarcely contain within bounds the ecstasy of her emotion.

"I am so glad you are back again, Anne! I could not believe the good news when the letter came to Mrs. Lake this morning. You have been away two weeks, and they have seemed like months."

"You did not come over: you said you should," faltered Anne.

"Ay. And I sprained my foot the day you left, and have had to nurse it. It is not strong yet. Bad luck, was it not? Bristow has been worse, too.—Where are you going?"

"I must take these things up to papa and Mrs. Lewis. Please let me go."

But, before he would release her hand, he suddenly bent his head and kissed her: once, twice.

"Pardon me, Anne, I could not help it; it is only a French greeting," he whispered, as she escaped with her face rosy-red, and her heart beating time to its own sweet music.

"What a stay Mr. Angerstyne is making!" exclaimed Fanny Podd, who had run about to seek Miss Dinah, and found her making a new surplice for Tom.

"Well, we are glad to have him stay," answered Miss Dinah, "and he has had a sprained ankle. We know now what is detaining him in Worcestershire. It

seems that some old lady is lying ill at Malvern, and he can't get away."

"Some old lady lying ill at Malvern!" retorted Fanny, who liked to take Miss Dinah down when she could. "Why should that detain Mr. Angerstyne? Who is the old lady!"

"She is a relation of his: his great-aunt, I think. And I believe she is very fond of him, and won't let him go to any distance. All these visits he makes to Malvern are to see her. She is very rich, and he will come in for her money."

"I'm sure he's rich enough without it; he does not want more money," grumbled Fanny. "If the old lady would leave a little to those who need it, she might do some good."

"She'd have to be made of gold and diamonds if she left some to all who need it," sighed Miss Dinah. "Mr. Angerstyne deserves to be rich, he is so liberal with his money. Many a costly dainty he causes us to send up to that poor sick Captain Bristow, letting him think it is all in the regular boarding fare."

"But I think it was fearfully sly of him never to tell us why he went so much to Malvern—only you must always put in a good word for everybody, Miss Dinah. I asked him one day what his attraction was, that he should be perpetually running over there, and he gravely answered me that he liked the Malvern air."

Just for a few days, Dr. Lewis seemed to get a little better. Mrs. Lewis's fascinations had returned to her, and she in a degree kept him alive. It might have been from goodness of heart, or it might have been that she did not like to neglect him before people

just yet, but she was ever devising plans for his amusement—which of course included that of herself and of her daughters. Mr. Angerstyne had not been more lavish of money in coach hire than was Mrs. Lewis now. Carriages for the country and flies for the town —that was the order of the day. Anne was rarely invited to make one of the party: for her there seemed never room. What of that?—when by staying at home she had the society of Mr. Angerstyne.

While they were driving everywhere, or taking their pleasure in the town, shopping and exhibiting their finery, of which they seemed to display a new stock perpetually, Anne was left at liberty to enjoy her dangerous happiness. Dangerous, if it should not come to anything: and he had not spoken yet. They would sit together over their German, Anne trying to beat it into him, and laughing with him at his mistakes. If she went out to walk, she presently found herself overtaken by Mr. Angerstyne: and they would linger in the mellow light of the soft autumn days, or in the early twilight. Whatever might come of it, there could be no question that for the time being she was living in the most intense happiness. And about a fortnight of this went on without interruption.

Then Dr. Lewis began to droop. One day when he was out he had another of those attacks in the carriage. It was very slight, Mrs. Lewis said when they got back; he did not lose consciousness for more than three or four minutes. But he continued to be so weak and ill afterwards that a physician was called in—Dr. Malden. What he said was known only to the patient and his wife, for nobody else was admitted to the conference.

"I want to go home," the Doctor said to Anne the next morning, speaking in his usual querulous, faint tone, and as if his mind were half gone. "I'm sure I did not smell any paint the last time; it must have been her fancy. I want to go there to be quiet."

"Well, papa, why don't you say so?"

"But it's of no use my saying so: she won't listen. I can't stand the racket here, child, and the perpetual driving out: the wheels of the carriages shake my head. And look at the expense! It frightens me."

Anne scarcely knew what to answer. She herself was powerless; and, so far as she believed, her father was; utterly so. Powerless in the hands of his new wife. Dr. Lewis glanced round the room as if to make sure there were no eavesdroppers, and went on in a whisper.

"I'm terrified, Anne. I am being ruined. All my ready money's gone; she has had it all; she made me draw it out of the bank. And there, in that drawer, are two rolls of bills; she brought them to me yesterday, and there's nothing to pay them with."

Anne's heart fluttered. Was he only fancying these things in his decaying mind? Or, were they true?

"September has now come in, papa, and your quarter's dividends will soon be due, you know. Do not worry yourself."

"They have been forestalled," he whispered. "She owed a lot of things before her marriage, and the people would have sued me had I not paid them. I wish we were back in France, child! I wish we had never left it!" And, but for one thing, Anne would have wished it, too.

One afternoon, when it was getting late, Anne went into High Street to buy some ribbon for her hair. Mrs. Lewis and her party had gone over to Croome, somebody having given her an order to see the gardens there. Lake's house was as busy as it could be, some fresh inmates of consequence being expected that evening; Anne had been helping Miss Dinah, and it was only at the last minute she could run out. In coming back, the ribbon bought, just abreast of the college gates she heard steps behind her, and found her arm touched. It was by Mr. Angerstyne. For the past two days—nearly three—he had been absent at Malvern. The sight of him was to her as if the sun had shone.

"Oh!—is it you?—are you back?" she cried, with as much quiet indifference as she could put on.

"I have just got back. My aunt is better. And how are you, Anne?"

"Very well, thank you."

"Need you go in yet? Let us take a short stroll. The afternoon is delightful."

He called it afternoon, but it was getting on fast for evening: and he turned in at the college gates as he spoke. So they wound round St. Michæl's churchyard and passed on to the Dark Alley, and so down the long flight of steps that leads from it, and on to the banks of the Severn.

"How are you all going on at Lake's?" he asked presently, breaking the silence.

"Just as usual. To-day is a grand field day," Anne added gaily: "at least, this evening is to be one, and we are not to dine till seven o'clock."

"Seven? So much the better. But why?"

"Some people of importance are coming——"

Mr. Angerstyne's laugh interrupted her. She laughed also.

"It is what Miss Dinah said: 'people of importance.' They will arrive late, so the dinner-hour is put off."

"Take care, Anne!"

A horse, towing a barge, was overtaking them. Mr. Angerstyne drew Anne out of the way, and the dinner and the new guests were forgotten.

It was almost dusk when they returned. The figures on the college tower were darkened, as they came through the large boat-house gate-way: the old elm-trees yonder, filled with their cawing rooks, looked weird in the dim twilight. Mr. Angerstyne did not turn to the Dark Alley again, but went straight up to the Green. He was talking of his estate in Essex. It was a topic often chosen by him; and Anne seemed to know the place quite well by this time.

"You would like the little stream that runs through the grounds," he was observing. "It is not, of course, like the grand river we have just left, but it is pleasant to wander by, for it winds in and out in the most picturesque manner possible, and the banks are overshadowed by trees. Yes, Anne, you would like that."

"Are you going through the cloisters?—is it not too late?" she interrupted, quite at a loss for something to say; not caring to answer that she *should* like to wander by the stream.

For he was crossing towards the little south cloister door: though onwards through the Green would have been their more direct road.

"Too late? No. Why should it be? You are not afraid of ghosts, are you?"

Anne laughed. But, lest she should be afraid of ghosts, he put her hand within his arm as they passed through the dark narrow passage beyond the postern; and so they marched arm-in-arm through the cloisters.

"To sit by that winding stream on a summer's day listening to its murmurs, to the singing of the birds, the sweet sighing of the trees; or holding low converse with a cherished companion—yes, Anne, you would like that. It would just suit you, for you are of a silent and dreamy nature."

There might not be much actual meaning in the words if you sat down to analyze them: but, to the inexperienced mind of Anne, they sounded very like plain speaking. At any rate, she took them to be an earnest that she *should* sometime sit by that stream with him—his wife. The dusky cloisters seemed to have suddenly filled themselves with refulgent light; the gravestones over which she was passing felt soft as the mossy glades of fairy-land: ay, even that mysterious stone that bears on it the one terrible word "Miserrimus." Heaven was above her, and heaven beneath: there was no longer any prosaic earth for Anne Lewis.

"Good-night to you, gentlefolks."

The salutation was from the cloister porter; who, coming in to close the gates, met them as they were nearing the west door. Not another word had passed until now: Mr. Angerstyne had fallen into silence; Anne could not have spoken to gain the world.

"Good-night to you, my man," he answered.

Lake's was in a bustle when they reached it. The luggage of the new people, who had just been shown to their chambers, was being taken in; the carriage containing Dr. and Mrs. Lewis was then just driving up. Anne felt alarmed as she caught sight of her father, he looked so very ill. Mr. Angerstyne, in his ready, kindly way, waited to help him down and give him his arm along the passage; he then ran up to his room, remarking that he had letters to write.

The people assembled for dinner in full fig, out of deference to the new comers: who proved to be a Lady Knight, and a Mrs. and Miss Colter. Anne wore her pretty grey bridesmaid's dress, and the ribbon, just bought, in her hair. At the very last moment, Mr. Angerstyne came down, his hands full of the letters he had been writing.

"Why, are *you* here?" exclaimed to him Lady Knight: who seemed to be a chatty, voluble woman. "I *am* surprised."

Mr. Angerstyne, putting his letters on the side table, until he could take them to the post, turned round at the address. A moment's stare, half doubt, half astonishment, and he went forward to shake Lady Knight's hand.

"What brings you here?" she asked.

"I have been here some little time. Old Miss Gibson is at Malvern, so I can't go far away."

There was no opportunity for more: dinner was waiting. Mr. Angerstyne and Anne sat side by side that evening; Lady Knight was opposite. Miss Diana presided as usual, her best yellow cap perched on the top of her curls.

During an interval of silence between the general

bustle and clatter of the dinner, for the two girls who waited (after their own fashion), had both run away with the fish to bring in the meat, Lady Knight looked across the table to put a question to Mr. Angerstyne.

"How is your wife?"

The silence dropped to a dead stillness. He appeared not to hear.

"How is your wife, Henry Angerstyne? Have you seen her lately?"

He could not make believe to be deaf any longer, and answered with angry curtness.

"No, I have not. She is all right, I suppose."

By the way the whole table stared, you might have thought a bomb-shell had fallen. Miss Diana sat with her mouth open in sheer amazement, and then spoke involuntarily.

"Are you really married, Mr. Angerstyne?"

"Of course he is married," said Lady Knight, answering Miss Diana. "All the world knows that. His wife is my cousin. I saw her at Lowestoft a few weeks ago, Henry. She was looking prettier than ever."

"Ah, Mr. Angerstyne, how sly you were, not to tell us!" cried Mrs. Lewis, playfully shaking her fan at him. "You—— Oh, goodness me!"

A loud crash! Jenny the maid had dropped a hot vegetable dish on the floor, scattering the pieces and spilling the peas; and followed it up with a shriek and a scream. That took off the attention; and Mr. Angerstyne, coolly eating away at his bread, turned to make some passing remark to Anne.

But the words he would have said were left unspoken. No ghost ever seen, in cloisters or out of

them, was whiter than she. Lips and fingers were alike trembling.

"You should be more careful, Jenny!" he called out in a tone of authority. "Ladies don't care to be startled in this way." Just as though Anne had turned white from the clatter of the broken dish!

Well, it had been a dreadful revelation for her. All the sunshine of this world seemed to have gone out for ever; to have left nothing behind it but a misty darkness. Rallying her pride and her courage, she went on eating her dinner, as the others did. Her head was throbbing, her brain burning; her mind had turned to chaos. She heard them making arrangements to go on a picnic party to the woods at Croome on the morrow; not in the least understanding what was said, or planned.

"You did surprise us!" observed Mrs. Lewis to Lady Knight, when they were in the drawing-room after dinner, and Mr. Angerstyne had gone out to post his letters. "What could have been his motive for allowing us to think him a bachelor?"

"A dislike to mention her name," replied Lady Knight, candidly. "That was it, I expect. He married her for her pretty face, and then found out what a goose she was. So they did not get on together. She goes her way, and he goes his; now and then they meet for a week or two, but it is not often."

"What a very unsatisfactory state of things!" cried Miss Dinah, handing round the cups of coffee herself for fear of another upset. "Is it her fault, or his?"

"Faults lie on both sides," said Lady Knight, who had an abrupt way of speaking, and was as poor as a

church mouse. "She has a fearfully affronting temper of her own; those women with dolls' faces sometimes have; and he was not as forbearing as he might have been. Any way, that is the state of affairs between Mr. and Mrs. Angerstyne; and, apart from it, there's no scandal or reproach attaching to either of them."

Anne, sitting in a quiet corner, listened to all this mechanically. What mattered the details to her?—the broad fact had been enough. The hum of conversation was going on all around; her father, looking somewhat the better for his dinner, was playing at backgammon with Tom Lake. She saw nothing, knew nothing, until Mr. Angerstyne dropped into the seat beside her.

"Shall you join this expedition to Croome, to-morrow, Anne?"

Julia and Fanny were thumping over a duet, pedal down, and Anne barely caught the low-spoken words.

"I do not know," she answered, after a brief pause. "My head aches."

"I don't much care about it myself; rather the opposite. I shall certainly not go if you don't."

Why! he was speaking to her just as though nothing had occurred! If anything could have added to her sense of shame and misery, it was this. It sounded like an insult, arousing all the spirit she possessed; her whole nature rose in rebellion against his line of conduct.

"Why have you been talking to me these many weeks, as you have been talking, Mr. Angerstyne?"

she asked in her straightforward simplicity, turning her face to his.

"There has been no harm in it," he answered.

"*Harm!*" she repeated, from her wrung heart. "Perhaps not to you. There has been at least no good in it."

"If you only knew what an interval of pleasantness it has been for me, Anne! Almost deluding me into forgetting my odious chains and fetters."

"Would a *gentleman* have so amused himself, Mr. Angerstyne?"

But she gave him no opportunity of reply. Rising from her seat, and drawing her slight form to its full height, she looked into his face steadily, knowing not perhaps how much of scorn and reproach her gaze betrayed, then crossed the room and sat down by her father. Once after that she caught his eye: caught the expression of sorrow, of repentance, of deep commiseration that shone in every line of his face—for she could not altogether hide the pain seated in her own. And later, amid the bustle of the general good-nights, she found her hand pressed within his, and heard his whispered, contrite prayer——

"Forgive me, Anne; forgive me!"

She lay awake all night, resolving to be brave, to make no sign; praying heaven to help her bear the anguish of her sorely-stricken heart, not to let the blow quite kill her. It seemed to her that she must feel it henceforth during all her life.

And before the house was well up in the morning, a messenger arrived post haste from Malvern, to summon Mr. Angerstyne to his aunt's dying bed. He told Miss Dinah, when he shook hands with her at

parting, that she might as well send his traps after him, if she would be so kind, as he thought he might not be able to return to Worcester again.

And that was the ending of Anne Lewis's love. Not a very uncommon end, people say. But she had been hardly dealt by.

PART THE THIRD.

THE blinds of a house closely drawn, the snow drifting against the windows outside, and somebody lying dead upstairs, cannot be called a lively state of things. Mrs. Lewis and her daughters, Julia and Fanny Podd, sitting over the fire in the darkened dining-room at Maythorn Bank, were finding it just the contrary.

When Dr. Lewis, growing worse and worse during their sojourn at Lake's boarding-house at Worcester the previous autumn, had one day plucked-up courage to open his mind to his physician, telling him that he was pining for the quiet of his own little cottage home, and that the stir and racket at Lake's was more than he could bear, Dr. Malden peremptorily told Mrs. Lewis that he must have his wish, *and go.* So she had to give in, and prepared to take him; though it went frightfully against the grain. That was in September, three months back; he had been getting weaker and more imbecile ever since, and now, just as Christmas was turned, he had sunk quietly away to his rest.

Anne, his loving, gentle daughter, had been his constant companion and attendant. He had not been so ill as to lie in bed, but a great deal had to be done for him, especially in the matter of amusing what poor remnant of mind was left. She read to him, she talked to him, she wrapped greatcoats about him, and took him out to walk on sunshiny days in the open

walk by the laurels. It was well for Anne that she was thus incessantly occupied, for it diverted her mind from the misery left there by the unwarrantable conduct of Mr. Angerstyne. When a girl's lover proves faithless, to dwell upon him and lament him brings to her a kind of painful pleasure; but that negative indulgence was denied to Anne Lewis: Henry Angerstyne was the husband of another, and she might not, willingly, keep him in her thoughts. To forget him, as she strove to do, was a hard and bitter task: but the indignation she felt at the man's deceit and cruel conduct was materially helping her. Once, since, she had seen his name in the *Times:* it was amidst the list of visitors staying at some nobleman's country house: Henry Angerstyne. And the thrill that passed through her veins as the name caught her eye, the sudden stopping and then rushing violently onwards of her life's blood, convinced her how little she had forgotten him.

"But I shall forget him in time," she said to herself, pressing her hand upon her wildly-beating heart. "In time, God helping me."

And from that moment she redoubled her care and thought for her father; and he died blessing her and her love for him.

Anne felt the loss keenly; though perhaps not quite so much so as she would have felt it had her later life been less full of suffering. It seemed to be but the last drop added to her cup of bitterness. She knew that to himself death was a release: he had ceased to find pleasure in life. And now she was left amidst strangers, or worse than strangers; she seemed not to have a friend to turn to in the wide world.

Dr. Lewis had died on Monday morning. This was Tuesday. Mrs. Lewis had been seeing people to-day and yesterday, giving her orders; but never once consulting Anne, or paying her the compliment to say, Would you like it to be this way, or that?

"How on earth any human being could have pitched upon this wretched out-of-the-world place, Crabb, to settle down in, puzzles me completely," suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Lewis, bending forward to stir the fire.

"He must have been a lunatic," acquiesced Julia, irreverently alluding to the poor man who was lying in the room above.

"Not a decent shop in the place! Not a dressmaker who can cut out a properly-fitting skirt! Be quiet, Fanny: you need not *dance*."

"One does not know what to do," grumbled Fanny, ceasing to shuffle, and returning to her seat. "But I should like to know, mamma, about our mourning."

"I think I shall go to Worcester to-day and order it," spoke up Mrs. Lewis briskly, after a pause of doubt. "Necessity has no law; and we cannot get proper things unless I do. Yes, we will go: I don't mind the weather. Julia, ring the bell."

Anne—poor Anne—came in to answer the bell. She had no choice: Sally was out on an errand.

"Just see that we have a tray in with the cold meat, Anne, at half-past twelve. We must go to Worcester about the mourning——"

"To Worcester!" involuntarily interrupted Anne, in her surprise.

"There's no help for it, though of course it's not the thing I would choose to do," said Mrs. Lewis,

coldly. "One cannot provide proper things here: bonnets especially. I will get you a bonnet at the same time. And we must have a bit of something, hot and nice, for tea, when we come home."

"Very well," sighed Anne.

In the afternoon, Anne sat in the same room alone, busy over some black work, on which her tears dropped slowly. When it was growing dusk, Mr. Coney and the young Rector of Timberdale came in together. Herbert Tanerton did not forget that his late step-father and Dr. Lewis were half brothers. Anne brushed away the signs of her tears, laid down her work, and stirred the fire into a blaze.

"Now, my lass," said the farmer, in his plain, homely way, but he always meant kindly, "I've just heard that that stepmother of yours went off to Worcester to-day with those two dandified girls of hers, and so I thought I'd drop in while the coast was clear. I confess I don't like her: and I say that somebody ought to look a bit to you and your interests."

"And I, coming over upon much the same errand, met Mr. Coney at the gate," added Herbert Tanerton, with a smile as near geniality as he ever gave. "I wish to express my deep regret for your loss, Miss Lewis, and to assure you of my true sympathy. You will think my visit a late one, but I had a—a service this afternoon." He would not say a funeral.

"You are both very kind, very," said Anne, her eyes again filling, "and I thank you for thinking of me. I feel isolated from all: this place at best is but strange to me after my life's home in France. It seems that I have not a friend in the world."

"Yes, you have," said the farmer; "and if my wife

had not been staying with our sick daughter at Worcester, she'd have been in to tell you the same. My dear, you are just going, please, to make a friend of *me*. And you won't think two or three questions, that I'd like to put, impertinent, will you?"

"That I certainly will not," said Anne.

"Well, now, to begin with: Did your father make a will?"

"Oh yes. I hold it."

"And do you chance to know how the property is left?"

"To me. No name but my own is mentioned in it."

"Then you'll be all right," said Mr. Coney. "I feared he might have been leaving somebody else some. You will have about £250 a-year: and that's enough for a young girl. When your father first came over, he spoke to me of his income and his means."

"I—I fear the income will be somewhat diminished from what it was," hesitated Anne, turning red at having to confess so much, because it would tell against her stepmother. "My father has had to sell out a good deal lately; to entrench upon his capital. I think the trouble it gave him hastened his end."

"Sell out for what?" asked old Coney.

"For bills, and—and debts, that came upon him."

"Her bills? Her debts?"

Anne did not expressly answer, but old Coney caught up the truth, and nodded his head in wrath. He as good as knew it before.

"Well, child, I suppose you may reckon, at the worst, on a clear two hundred a-year, and you can live on that. Not keep house, perhaps; and it would be

very lonely for you also. You will have to take up your abode with some pleasant family; many a one would be glad to have you."

"I should like to go back to France," sighed Anne, recalling the bitter misery that England had brought her: first in her new stepmother, then in Mr. Angerstyne, and now in her father's death. "I have many dear friends in France who will take every care of me."

"Well, I don't know," cried old Coney, with a blank look. "France may be very well for some people; but I'd a'most as lieve go to the gallows as there. Don't you like England?"

"I should like it well, if I—if I could be happy in it," she answered, turning red again at the thought of him who had marred her happiness. "But, you see, I have no ties here."

"You must make ties, my lass."

"How much of the income ought I to pay over yearly to Mrs. Lewis, do you think?" she questioned. "Half of it?"

"*Half!* No!" burst forth old Coney, coughing down a strong word which had nearly slipped out. "You will give her none. *None.* A pretty idea of justice you must have, Anne Lewis."

"But it would be fair to give it her," argued Anne. "My father married her."

"Oh, did he, though! She married him. *I* know. Other folks know. You will give her none, my dear, and allow her none. She is a hard, scheming, deceitful brick-bat of a woman. What made her lay hold of your poor weakened father, and play off upon him her wiles and her guiles, and marry him, right or wrong?" ran on old Coney, getting purple enough for apoplexy.

"She did it for a home; she did it that she might get her back debts paid; that's what. She has had her swing as long as his poor life lasted, and put you down as if you were a changeling; we have all seen *that*. Now that her short day's over, she must go back again to her own ways and means. Ask the parson there what he thinks."

The parson, in his cold sententious way, that was so much more suited to an old bishop than a young rector, avowed that he thought with Mr. Coney. He could not see that Mrs. Lewis's few months of marriage entitled her (all attendant circumstances being taken into consideration) to deprive Miss Lewis of any portion of her patrimony.

"You are sure you have got the will all tight and safe?" resumed Mr. Coney. "I wouldn't answer for her not stealing it. Ah, you may laugh, young lassie, but I don't like that woman. Miss Dinah Lake was talking to me a bit the other day; she don't like her, either."

Anne was smiling at his vehement partisanship. She rose, unlocked a desk that stood on the side-table, and brought out a parchment, folded and sealed. It was subscribed "Will of Thomas Lewis, M.D."

"Here it is," she said. "Papa had it drawn up by an English lawyer just before we left France. He gave it to me, as he was apt to mislay things himself, charging me to keep it safely."

"And mind you do keep it safely," enjoined old Coney. "It won't be opened, I suppose, till after the funeral's over."

"But wait a minute," interposed the clergyman,

"Does not marriage—a subsequent marriage—render a will invalid?"

"Bless my heart, no: much justice there'd be in that!" retorted old Coney, who knew about as much of law as he did of the moon. And Mr. Tanerton said no more; he was not certain; and supposed the older and more experienced man might be right.

Anne sighed as she locked up the will again. She was both just and generous; and she knew she should be sure to hand over to Mrs. Lewis the half of whatever income it might give her.

"Well, my girl," said the farmer, as they prepared to leave, "if you want me, or anything I can do, you just send Sally over, and I'll be here in a jiffy."

"It is to be at Timberdale, I conclude?" whispered Herbert Tanerton, as he shook hands. Anne knew that he alluded to the funeral; and the colour came up in her face as she answered.

"I don't know. My father wished it; he said he wished to lie by his brother. But Mrs. Lewis—here they come, I think."

They came in with snowy bonnets and red noses, stamping the slush off their shoes. It was a good walk from the station. Mrs. Lewis had expected to get a fly there; one was generally in waiting: but somebody jumped out of the train before she did, and secured it. It made her feel cross and look cross.

"Such a wretched trapes!" she was beginning in a vinegar tone; but at sight of the gentlemen her face and voice smoothed down to oil. She begged them to resume their seats; but they said they were already going.

"We were just asking about the funeral," the farmer stayed to say. "It is to be at Timberdale?"

Up went Mrs. Lewis's handkerchief to her eyes. "Dear Mr. Coney, I think not. Crabb will be better."

"But he wished to lie at Timberdale."

"Crabb will be so much cheaper—and less trouble," returned the widow, with a sob. "It is as well to avoid useless expense."

"Cheaper!" cried old Coney, his face purple again with passion, so much did he dislike her and her ways. "Not cheaper at all. *Dearer.* Dearer, ma'am. Must have a hearse and coach, any way: and Herbert Tanerton here won't charge fees if it's done at Timberdale."

"Oh, just as you please, my dear sir. And if *he* wished it, poor dear! Yes, yes; Timberdale of course. Anywhere."

They got out before she had dried her eyes—or pretended at it. Julia and Fanny then fetched in some bandboxes, which had been waiting in the passage. Mrs. Lewis forgot her tears, and put back her cloak.

"Which is Anne's?" she asked. "Oh, this one"—beginning to undo one of the boxes. "My own will be sent to-morrow night. I bought yours quite plain, Anne."

Very plain indeed was the bonnet she handed out. Plain and common, and made of the cheapest materials; one that a lady would not like to put upon her head. Julia and Fanny were trying theirs on at the chimney-glass. Gay bonnets, theirs, glistening with jet beads and black flowers. The bill lay open on the table, and Anne read the cost: her own, twelve shil-

lings; the other two, thirty-three shillings each. Mrs. Lewis made a grab at the bill, and crushed it into her pocket.

"I knew you would prefer it plain," said she. "For real mourning it is always a mistake to have things too costly."

"True," acquiesced Anne; "but yet—I think they should be *good*."

It seemed to her that to wear this bonnet would be very like disrespect to the dead. She silently determined to buy a better as soon as she had the opportunity.

Of all days, for weather, the one of the funeral was about the worst. Sleet, snow, rain, and wind. The Squire had a touch of lumbago; he could not face it; and old Coney came bustling in to say that I was to attend in his place. Anne wanted Johnny Ludlow to go all along, he added; her father had liked him; only there was no room before in the coach.

"Yes, yes," cried the Squire, "Johnny of course. He is not afraid of lumbago. Make haste and get into black things, lad."

Well, it was shivery, as we rolled along in the creachy old mourning-coach, behind the hearse: Mr. Coney and the Podds' cousin-lawyer from Birmingham on one side; I and Cole, the doctor, opposite. The sleet pattered against the windows, the wind whistled in our ears. The lawyer kept saying "eugh," and shaking his shoulders, telling us he had a cold in his head; and looked just as stern as he had at the wedding.

All was soon over: Herbert Tanerton did not read slowly to-day: and we got back to Maythorn Bank.

Cole had left us: he stopped the coach en route, and cut across a field to see a patient: but Mr. Coney drew me into the house with him after the lawyer.

"We will go in, Johnny," he whispered. "The poor girl has no relation or friend to back her up, and I shall stay with her while the will's read."

Mrs. Lewis, in a new widow's cap as big as a house, and the two girls in shining jet chains, were sitting in state. Anne came in the next minute, her face pale, her eyes red. We all sat down; and for a short while looked at one another in silence, like so many mutes.

"Any will to be read? I am told there is one," spoke the lawyer—who had, as Fanny Podd whispered to me, a wife at home as sour as himself. "If so, it had better be produced: I have to catch a train."

"Yes, there is a will," answered old Coney, glad to find that Anne, as he assumed, had mentioned the fact. "Miss Lewis holds the will. Will you get it, my dear?"

Anne unlocked the desk on the side-table, and put the will into Mr. Coney's hand. Without saying with your leave, or by your leave, he broke the seals, and clapped on his spectacles.

"What's *that?*" Mrs. Lewis asked old Coney, from her seat on the sofa.

"Dr. Lewis's will, ma'am. Made in France, I believe: was it not, Miss Anne?"

"My dear, sweet creature, it is so much waste paper," spoke Mrs. Lewis, smiling sweetly upon Anne. "My deeply-lamented husband's last will and testament was made long since he left France."

Pulling up the sofa pillow at her elbow, she pro-

duced another will, and asked the lawyer if he would be good enough to unseal and read it. It had been made, as the date proved, at Cheltenham, the day after she and Dr. Lewis were married; and it left every earthly thing he possessed to "his dear wife, Louisa Jane Lewis."

Old Coney's face was a picture. He stared alternately at the will in his hands, at the one just read by the lawyer. Anne stood meekly by his side; looking as if she did not understand matters.

"*That* can't stand good!" spoke the farmer in his honest indignation. "The money can't go to you, ma'am"—turning his burly form about to face Mrs. Lewis, and treading on my toes as he did it. "The money is this young lady's: part of it comes from her own mother: it can't be yours. Thomas Lewis must have signed the will in his sleep."

"Does a daughter inherit before a wife, dear sir?" cried Mrs. Lewis, in a voice soft as butter. "It is the most just will my revered husband could have made. I *need* the money: I cannot keep on the house without it. Anne does not need it: she has no house to keep."

"Look here," says old Coney, buttoning his coat and looking fiercely at the company. "It's not my wish to be rude to-day, remembering what place we came straight here from; but if you don't want to be put down as—as schemers, you will not lose an hour in making over the half of that income to Anne Lewis. It is what she proposed to do by *you*, madam, when she thought all was left to her," he added, brushing past Mrs. Lewis. "Come along, Johnny."

The time went on. Mrs. Lewis kept all the money. She gave notice to leave the house at midsummer: but she had it on her hands until then, and told people she should die of its dulness. So far as could be known, she had little, if any, income, save that which she inherited from Dr. Lewis.

Anne's days did not pass in clover. Treated as of no account, she was made fully to understand that she was only tolerated in what was once her own home; and she had to make herself useful in it from morning till night, just like a servant. Remembering what had been, and what was, Anne felt heart-broken, submitting patiently and unresistingly to trials; but a reaction set in, and her spirit grew rebellious.

"Is there any remedy, I wonder?" she asked herself one night in her little chamber, when preparing for bed, and the day had been a particularly trying day. She had ventured to ask for a few shillings for some purpose or other, and was told she could not have them: being Easter Monday, Sally had had a holiday, and she had been kept at work like a slave in the girl's place: Herbert Tanerton and his wife had come to invite her for a day or two to Timberdale, and a denial was returned to them without herself being consulted, or even allowed to see them. Yes, it had been a trying day. And in France Easter had always been kept as a *fête*.

"Is there not a remedy?" she debated, as she slowly undressed. "I have no home but this; but—could I not find one?"

She knew that she had no means of living, save by her own exertions; she had not even a rag to wear or a coin to spend, save what should come to her by

Mrs. Lewis's bounty. And, whether that lady possessed bounty or not, she seemed never to possess ready money. It appeared to Anne that she had been hardly dealt by in more ways than one; that the world was full of nothing but injustice and trouble.

"And I fancy," added Anne, thinking out her thoughts, "that they will be glad to get rid of me; that they want me gone. So I dare say there will be no objection made here."

With morning light, she was up and busy. It fell to her lot to prepare the breakfast: and she must not keep the ladies waiting for it one minute. This morning, however, she had to keep them waiting; but not through any fault of hers.

They grew impatient. Five minutes past nine: ten minutes past nine: what did Anne mean? Julia and Fanny were not much better dressed than when they got out of bed; old jackets on, rough and rumpled hair stuck up with hair-pins. In that respect they presented a marked contrast to Anne, who was ever trim and nice.

"I'm sure she must be growing the coffee-berries!" cried Fanny, as she flung the door open. "*Is* that breakfast coming to-day, or to-morrow?"

"In two minutes," called back Anne.

"Oh, what a dreary life it is, out here!" groaned Mrs. Lewis. "Girls, I think we will go over to Worcester to-day, and arrange to stay a week at Lake's. And then you can go to the subscription ball at the Town Hall, that you are so wild over."

"Oh, do, do!" cried Julia, all animation now. "If I don't go to that ball, I shall die."

"I shall run away if we don't; I have said all

along I would not miss the Easter ball," spoke Fanny. "Mamma, I cannot *think* why you don't shut this miserable house up!"

"Will you find the rent for another?" coolly asked Mrs. Lewis. "What *can* that girl be at with the coffee?"

It came in at last; and Anne was railed at for her laziness. When she could get a word in, she explained that Sally had had an accident with the tea-kettle, and fresh water had to be boiled.

More indignation: Julia's egg turned out to be bad. What business had Anne to boil bad eggs? Anne, saying nothing, took it away, boiled another and brought it in. Then Mrs. Lewis fancied she could eat a thin bit of toasted bacon; and Anne must go and do it at the end of a fork. Altogether the breakfast was nearly at an end before she could sit down at a corner of the table and eat her own bread and butter.

"I have been thinking," she began, in a hesitating tone, to Mrs. Lewis, "that I should like to go out. If you have no objection."

"Go out where?"

"Into some situation."

Mrs. Lewis, in the act of conveying a piece of bacon to her mouth, held it suspended in mid air, and stared at Anne in amazement.

"Into *what?*"

"A situation in some gentleman's family. I have no prospect before me; no home; I must earn my own living."

"The girl's daft!" cried Mrs. Lewis, resuming her breakfast. "No home! Why, you have a home here; your proper home. Was it not your father's?"

"Yes. But it is not mine."

"It is yours; and your days in it are spent usefully. What more can you want? Now, Anne, hold your tongue, and don't talk nonsense. If you have finished your breakfast you can begin to take the things away."

"Mamma, why don't you let her go?" whispered Fanny, as Anne went out with the first lot of plates.

"Because she is useful to me," said Mrs. Lewis. "Who else is there to see to our comforts? we should be badly off with that incapable Sally. And who would do all the needle-work? recollect how much she gets through. No; as long as we are here, Anne must stay with us. Besides, the neighbourhood would have its say finely if we let her turn out. People talk, as it is, about the will, and are not so friendly as they might be. As if they would like me to fly in the face of my dear departed husband's wishes, and tacitly reproach his judgment!"

But Anne did not give up. When she had taken all the things away and folded up the table-cloth, she came in again and spoke.

"I hope you will not oppose me in this, Mrs. Lewis. I should like to take a situation."

"And, pray, what situation do you suppose you could take?" ironically spoke Mrs. Lewis. "You are not fitted to fill one in a gentleman's family."

"Unless it be as cook-maid," put in Julia.

"Or seamstress," said Fanny. "By the way, I want some more cuffs made, Anne."

"I should like to try for a situation, notwithstanding my deficiencies. I could do something or other."

"There, that's enough: must I tell you again not

to talk nonsense?" retorted Mrs. Lewis. "And now you must come upstairs and see to my things, and to Julia's and Fanny's. We are going to Worcester by the half-past eleven train—and you may expect us home to tea when you see us."

They went off. As soon as their backs were turned, Anne came running into our house, finding me and Mrs. Todhetley at the piano. It was pleasant Easter weather, though March was not out: the Squire and Tod had gone to Dyke Manor on some business, and would not be home till late. Anne told all her doubts and difficulties to the Mater, and asked her advice, as to whether there would be anything wrong in her seeking for a situation.

"No, my dear," said the mother, "it would be right, instead of wrong. If——"

"If people treated me as they treat you, Anne, I'd not stay with them a day," said I, hotly. "I don't like toads."

"Oh, Johnny!" cried Mrs. Todhetley. "Never call names, dear. No obligation whatever, Anne, lies on you to remain in that home; and I think you would do well to leave it. You shall stay and dine with me and Johnny at one o'clock, Anne; and we will talk it over."

"I wish I could stay," said poor Anne; "I hardly knew how to spare these few minutes to run here. Mrs. Lewis has left me a gown to unpick and turn, and I must hasten to begin it."

"So would I begin it!" I cried, going out with her as far as the gate. "And I should like to know who is a toad if she's not."

"Don't you think I might be a nursery governess,

Johnny?" she asked me, turning round after going through the gate. "I might teach French and English and German: and I am very fond of little children. The difficulty will be to get an introduction. I have thought of one person who might give it me—if I could only dare to ask him."

"Who's that?"

"Sir Robert Tenby. He is of the great world, and must know everybody in it. And he has always shown himself so very sociable and kind. Do you think I might venture to apply to him?"

"Why not? He could not eat you for it."

She ran on, and I ran back. But, all that day, sitting over her task of work, Anne was in a state of shilly-shally, not able to make up her mind. It was impossible to know how Sir Robert Tenby might take it.

"I have made you a drop of coffee and a bit of hot toast and butter, Miss Anne," said Sally, coming in with a small tray. "Buttered it well. She's not here to see it."

Anne laughed, and thanked her; Mrs. Lewis had left them only cold bacon for dinner, and ordered them to wait tea until her return. But before the refreshment was well disposed of, she and the girls came in.

"How soon you are back!" involuntarily cried Anne, hoping Mrs. Lewis would not smell the coffee. "And how are they all at Lake's?"

Mrs. Lewis answered by giving a snappish word to Lake's, and ordered Anne to get tea ready. Fanny whispered the information that they were going to Worcester on the morrow to stay over the Easter ball; but *not to Lake's*. Anne wondered at that.

Upon arriving at Lake's that morning, Miss Dinah had received them very coolly; and was, as Mrs. Lewis remarked afterwards, barely civil. The fact was, Miss Dinah, being just-minded, took up Anne's cause rather warmly; and did not scruple to think that the beguiling poor weak-minded Dr. Lewis out of the will he made, was just a piece of iniquity, and nothing less. Perceiving Miss Dinah's crusty manner, Mrs. Lewis inquired after Mrs. Lake. "Where's Emma?" she asked.

"Very much occupied to-day. Can I do anything for you?"

"We are thinking of coming to you to-morrow for a week, Dinah; I and my two girls. They are wild to go to the Easter ball. Which rooms can you give us?"

"Not any rooms," spoke Miss Dinah, decisively. "We cannot take you in."

"Not take me in! When the servant opened the door to us she said the house was not full. I put the question to her."

"But we are expecting it to be full," said Miss Dinah, curtly. "The Beales generally come over to the ball; and we must keep rooms for them."

"You don't know that they are coming, I expect. And in a boarding-house the rule holds good, 'First come, first served.'"

"A boarding-house holds its own rules, and is not guided by other people's. Very sorry: but we cannot make room this time for you and your daughters."

"I'll soon see that," retorted Mrs. Lewis, getting hot. "Where's Emma Lake? I am her cousin, and shall insist on being taken in."

"She can't take you in without my consent. And

she won't: that's more. Look here, Mrs. Podd—I beg your pardon—the new name does not always come pat to me. When you were staying here before, and kept us so long out of our money, it put us to more inconvenience than you had any idea of. We——"

"You were paid at last."

"Yes," said Miss Dinah; "with poor Dr. Lewis's money, I expect. We made our minds up then, Mrs. Lewis, not to take you again. At least, *I* did; and Mrs. Lake agreed with me."

"You will not have to wait again: I have money in my pocket now. And the girls must go to the ball on Thursday."

"If your pockets are all full of money, it can make no difference to me. I'm sorry to say I cannot take you in, Mrs. Lewis: and now I have said all I mean to say."

Mrs. Lewis went about the house, looking for Mrs. Lake, and did not find her. She, not as strong minded as Miss Dinah, had bolted herself into the best bedroom, just then unoccupied. So Mrs. Lewis, not to be baffled as to the ball, went out to seek for other lodgings, and found them in the Foregate Street.

"But we shall be home on Saturday," she said to Anne, as they were starting this second time for Worcester, on the Wednesday morning, the finery for the ball behind them in two huge trunks. "I have to pay a great deal for the rooms, and can't afford to stay longer than that. And mind that you and Sally get the house in order while we are away; it's a beautiful opportunity to clean it thoroughly down: and get on as quickly as you can with the needle-work."

"Why, my dear young lassie, I am not able to help you in such a thing as this. You had better see the master himself."

Anne had lost no time. Leaving Sally to the cleaning, she dressed herself and walked over on the Wednesday afternoon to Bellwood, Sir Robert Tenby's seat. She explained her business to Mrs. Macbean, the old family housekeeper, and asked whether she could help her into any good family.

"Nae, nae, child. I live down here all my days, and I know nothing of the gentlefolks in the great world. The master knows 'em all."

"I did think once of asking if I might see Sir Robert; but my courage fails me now," said Anne.

"And why should it?" returned the old lady. "If there's one man more ready than another to do a kindness, or more sociable to speak with, it's Sir Robert Tenby. He takes after his mother for that, my late dear lady; not after his father. Sir George was a bit proud. I'll go and tell Sir Robert what you want."

Sir Robert was in his favourite room; a small one with a bright fire in it, its purple chairs and curtains bordered with gold. It was bright altogether, Anne thought as she entered: for he said he would see her. The windows looked on a green velvet lawn, dotted with beds of early flowers, and thence to the park; and beyond all, to the chain of the Malvern hills, rising against the blue sky. The baronet sat near one of the windows, some books on a small table at his elbow. He came forward to shake hands with Anne, and gave her a chair opposite his own. And, what with his good homely face and its smile of welcome, and his

sociable, unpretending words, Anne felt at home at once.

In her own quiet way, so essentially that of a lady in its unaffected truth, she told him what she wanted: to find a home in some good family, who would be kind to her in return for her services, and pay her as much as would serve to buy her gowns and bonnets. Sir Robert Tenby, no stranger to the gossip rife in the neighbourhood, had heard of the unjust will, and of Anne's treatment by the new wife.

"It is, I imagine, impossible for a young lady to get into a good family without an introduction," said Anne. "And I thought—perhaps—you might speak for me, sir: you do know a little of me. I have no one else to recommend me."

He did not answer for the moment: he sat looking at her. Anne blushed, and went on, hoping she was not offending him.

"No one else, I mean, who possesses your influence, and mixes habitually with the great world. I should not care to take service in an inferior family: my poor father would not have liked it."

"Take service," said he, repeating the word. "It is as governess that you wish to go out?"

"As nursery governess, I thought. I may not aspire to any better position, for I know nothing of accomplishments. But little children need to be taught French and German; I could do that."

"You speak French well, of course?"

"As a native. German also. And I think I speak good English, and could teach it. And oh, sir, if you did chance to know of any family who would engage me, I should be so grateful to you."

"French, English, and German," said he, smiling. "Well, I can't tell what the great world, as you put it, may call accomplishments; but I think those three enough for anybody."

Anne smiled too. "They are only languages, Sir Robert. They are not music and drawing. Had my dear mamma suspected I should have to earn my own living, she would have had me educated for it."

"I think it is a very hard thing that you should have to earn it," spoke Sir Robert.

Anne glanced up through her wet eye-lashes: reminiscences of her mother always brought tears. "There's no help for it, sir; I have not a shilling in the world."

"And no home but one that you are ill-treated in —made to do the work of a servant? Is it not so?"

Anne coloured painfully. How did he know this? Generous to Mrs. Lewis in spite of all, she did not care to speak of it herself.

"And if people did not think me clever enough to teach, sir," she went on, passing over his question, "I might perhaps go out to be useful in other ways. I can make French cakes and show a cook how to make nice French dishes; and I can read aloud well, and do all kinds of needlework. Some old lady, who has no children of her own, might be glad to have me."

"I think many an old lady would," said he. The remark put her in spirits. She grew animated.

"Oh, do you! I am so glad. If you should know of one, sir, would you please to tell her of me?"

Sir Robert nodded, and Anne rose to leave. He rose also.

"If I could be so fortunate as to get into such a

home as this, with some kind old lady for my friend and mistress, I should be quite happy," she said in the simplicity of her heart. "How pleasant this room is!—and how beautiful it is outside!"—pausing to look at the early flowers, as she passed the window.

"Do you know Bellwood? Were you ever here before?"

"No, sir, never."

Sir Robert put on his hat and went out with her, showing her some pretty spots about the grounds. Anne was enchanted, especially with the rocks and the cascades. Versailles, she thought, could not be better than Bellwood.

"And when you hear of anything, sir, you will please to let me know?" she said, in parting.

"Yes. You had better come again soon. This is Wednesday: suppose you call on Friday. Will you?"

"Oh, I shall be only too glad. I will be sure to come. Good-bye, Sir Robert: and thank you very, very much."

She went home with light heels and a lighter heart: she had not felt so happy since her father died.

"How good he is! how kind! a true gentleman," she thought. "And what a good thing he fixed Friday instead of Saturday, for on Saturday they will be at home. But it is hardly possible that he will have heard of any place by that time, unless he has one in his eye."

It was Friday afternoon before Anne could get to Bellwood, and rather late also. She asked, as before, for Mrs. Macbean, not presuming to ask direct for Sir

Robert Tenby. Sir Robert was out, but was expected in every minute, and Anne waited in Mrs. Macbean's parlour.

"Do you think he has heard of anything for me?" was one of the first questions she put.

"Eh, my dear, and how should I know?" was the old lady's reply. "He does not tell me of his affairs. Not but what he talks to me a good deal, and always like a friend: he does not forget that my late leddy, his mother, made more of a friend of me than a servant. Many's the half-hour he keeps me talking in his parlour; and always bids me take the easiest seat there. I wish he would marry!"

"Do you?" replied Anne, mechanically: for she was thinking more of her own concerns than Sir Robert's.

"Why, yes, that I do. It's a lonely life for him at best, the one he leads. I've not scrupled to tell him, times and oft, that he ought to bring a mistress home ——Eh, but there he is! That's his step."

As before, Anne went into the pretty room that Sir Robert, when alone, mostly sat in. Three or four opened letters lay upon the table, and she wondered whether they related to her.

"No, I have as yet no news for you," he said, smiling at her eager face, and keeping her hand in his while he spoke. "You will have to come again for it. Sit down?"

"But if—if you have nothing to tell me to-day, I had better not take up your time," said Anne, not liking to appear intrusive.

"My time! If you knew how slowly time some days seems to pass for me, you would have no scruple

about 'taking it up.' Sit here. This is a pleasant seat."

With her eyes fixed on the outer landscape, Anne sat on and listened to him. He talked of various things, and she felt as much at her ease (as she told me that same evening) as though she had been talking with me. Afterwards she felt half afraid she had been too open, for she told him all about her childhood's home in France and her dear mother. It was growing dusk when she got up to go.

"Will you come again on Monday afternoon?" he asked. "I shall be out in the morning."

"If I can, sir. Oh yes, if I can. But Mrs. Lewis, who will be at home then, does not want me to take a situation at all, and she may not let me come out."

"I should come without telling her," smiled Sir Robert. "Not want you to leave home, eh? Would like you to stay there to make the puddings? Ay, I understand. Well, I shall expect you on Monday. There may be some news, you know."

And, somehow, Anne took up the notion that there would be news, his tone sounded so hopeful. All the way home her feet seemed to tread on air.

On the Sunday evening, when they were all sitting together at Maythorn Bank, and Anne had no particular duty on hand, she took courage to tell of what she had done, and that Sir Robert Tenby was so good as to interest himself for her. Mrs. Lewis was indignant; the young ladies were pleasantly satirical.

"As nursery governess: you!" mocked Miss Julia. "What shall you teach your pupils? To play at cats' cradle?"

"Why, you know, Anne, you are not *fit* for a gover-

ness," said Fanny. "It would be quite—quite *wicked* of you to make believe to be one. You never learnt a note of music. You can't draw. You can't paint."

"You had better go to school yourself, first," snapped Mrs. Lewis. "I will not allow you to take any such step: so put all thought of it out of your head."

Anne leaned her aching brow upon her hand in perplexity. Was she so unfit? Would it be wicked? She determined to put the case fully before her kind friend, Sir Robert Tenby, and ask his opinion.

Providing that she could get to Sir Robert's. Ask leave to go, she dare not; for she knew the answer would be a point-blank refusal.

But fortune favoured her. Between three and four o'clock on Monday afternoon, Mrs. Lewis and her daughters dressed themselves and sailed away to call on some people at South Crabb; which lay in just the contrary direction to Bellwood. They left Anne a heap of sewing to do: but she left the sewing and went out on her own score. I met her near the Ravine. She told me what she had done, and looked bright and flushed over it.

"Mrs. Lewis is one cat, and they are two other cats, Anne. Tod says so. Good-bye. Good luck to you!"

"Eh, my dear, and I was beginning to think you didna mean to come," was Mrs. Macbean's salutation. "But Sir Robert is nae back yet, he has been out on horseback since the morning; and he said you were to wait for him. So just take your bonnet off, and you shall have a cup of tea with me!"

Nothing loth, Anne took off her out-of-doors things.

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"They will be home before I am, and find me gone out," she reflected; "but they can't quite kill me for it." The old lady rang her bell for tea, and thought what a nice and pretty young gentlewoman Anne looked in her plain black dress with its white neck-frill, and the handsome jet necklace that had been her mother's.

But before the tea could be made, Sir Robert Tenby's horse trotted up, and they heard him go to his sitting-room. Mrs. Macbean took Anne into his presence, saying at the same time that she had been about to give the young lady a cup of tea.

"I should like some tea too," said Sir Robert; "Miss Lewis can take it with me. Send it in."

It came in upon a waiter, and was placed upon the table. Anne, at his request, put sugar and cream into his cup, handed it to him, and then took her own. He was looking very thoughtful; she seemed to fancy he had no good news for her, as he did not speak of it; and her heart went down, down. In a very timid tone, she told him of the depreciating opinion held of her talents at home, and begged him to say what *he* thought, for she would not like to be guilty of undertaking any duty she was not fully competent to fulfil.

"Will you take some more tea?" was all Sir Robert said in answer.

"No, thank you, sir."

"Another biscuit? No? We will send the tray away then."

Ringing the bell, a servant came in and took the things. Sir Robert, standing at the window then, and looking down at Anne as she sat, began to speak.

"I think there might be more difficulty in getting

you a situation as governess than we thought for: one that would be quite suitable, at least. Perhaps another kind of situation would do better for you."

Her whole face, turned up to him with its gaze of expectancy, changed to sadness; the light in her eyes died away. It seemed so like the knell of all her hopes. Sir Robert only smiled.

"If you could bring yourself to take it—and to like it," he continued.

"But what situation is it, sir?"

"That of my wife. That of lady of Bellwood."

Just for a moment or two, she simply stared at him. When his meaning reached her comprehension, her face turned red and white with emotion. Sir Robert took her hand and spoke more fully. He had learnt to like her very very much, to esteem her, and wished her to be his wife.

"I am aware that there is a good deal of difference in our ages, my dear; more than twenty years," he went on, while she sat in silence. "But I think you might find happiness with me; I will do my very best to ensure it. Better be my wife than a nursery governess. What do you say?"

"Oh, sir, I do not know what to say," she answered, trembling a little. "It is so unexpected—and a great honour—and—and I am overwhelmed."

"Could you like me?" he gently asked.

"I do like you, sir; very much. But this—this would be different. Perhaps you would let me take until to-morrow to think about it?"

"Of course I will. Bring me your answer then. Bring it yourself, whatever it may be."

"I will, sir. And I thank you very greatly."

All night long Anne Lewis lay awake. Should she take this good man for her husband, or should she not? She did like him very much: and what a position it would be for her; and how sheltered she would be henceforth from the frowns of the world! Anne might never have hesitated, but for the remains of her love for Mr. Angerstyne. That was passing away from her heart day by day, as she knew; it would soon have passed entirely. She could never feel that same love again; it was over and done with for ever; but there was surely no reason why she should sacrifice all her future to its remembrance. *Yes:* she would accept Sir Robert Tenby: and would, by the help of Heaven, make him a true, faithful, good wife.

It was nearly dusk the next afternoon before she could leave the house. Mrs. Lewis had kept her in sight so long that she feared she might not get the opportunity that day. She ran all the way to Bellwood, anxious to keep her promise: she could not bear to seem to trifle, even for a moment, with this good and considerate man. Sir Robert was waiting for her in a glow of fire-light. He came forward, took both her hands in his, and looked into her face inquiringly.

"Well?"

"Yes, sir, if you still wish to take me. I will try to be to you a loving wife; obedient and faithful."

With a sigh of relief, he sat down on a sofa that was drawn to the fire and placed her beside him, holding her hand still.

"My dear, I thank you: you have made me very happy. You shall *never* have cause to repent it."

"It is so strange," she whispered, "that you should wait all these years, with the world to choose from,

and then think of *me* at last! I can scarcely believe it."

"Ay, I suppose it is strange. But I must tell you something, Anne. When quite a youth, only one-and-twenty, there was a young lady whom I dearly loved. She was poor, and not of much family, and my father forbade the union. She married some one else, and died. It is for the love of her I have kept single all these years. But I shall not make you the less good husband."

"And I—I wish to tell you—that *I* once cared for some one," whispered Anne in her straightforward honesty. "It is all over and done with; but I did like him very much."

"Then, my dear, we shall be even," he said, with a merry smile. "The one cannot reproach the other. And now—this is the beginning of April: before the month shall have closed you had better come to me. We have nothing to wait for; and I do not like, now that you belong to me, to leave you one moment longer than is needful with that lady whom you are forced to call stepmother."

How Anne got home that late afternoon she hardly knew: she knew still less how to bring the news out. In the course of the following morning, she tried at it, and made a bungle of it.

"Sir Robert not going to get you a situation as governess!" interrupted Julia, before Anne had half finished. "Of course he is not. He knows you are not capable of taking one. *I* thought how much he was intending to help you. You must have had plenty of *cheek*, Anne, to trouble him."

"I am going to be his wife instead," said poor

Anne, meekly. "He has asked me to be. And—and it is to be very soon; and he is coming to see Mrs. Lewis this morning."

Mrs. Lewis, sitting back in an easy-chair, her feet on the fender, dropped the book she was reading, to stare at Anne. Julia burst into a laugh of incredulity. Her mother echoed it, and spoke:

"You poor infatuated girl! This comes of being brought up on French soup. But Sir Robert Tenby has no right to play jokes upon you. I shall write and tell him so."

"I—think—he is there," stammered Anne.

There he was. A handsome carriage was drawing up to the gate, bearing the baronet's badge upon its panels. Sir Robert sat inside. A footman came up the path and thundered at the door.

Not very long afterwards—it was in the month of June—Anne and her husband were guests at a London crush in Berkeley Square. It was too crowded to be pleasant. Anne began to look tired, and Sir Robert whispered to her that if she had had enough of it, they would go home. "Very gladly," she answered, and turned to say good-night to her hostess.

"Anne! How are you?"

The unexpected interruption, in a voice she knew quite well, and which sent a thrill through her, even yet, pulled Anne up in her course. There stood Henry Angerstyne, his hand held out in greeting, a confident smile, as if assuming she could only receive him joyfully, on his handsome face.

"I am so much surprised to see you here; so delighted to meet you once again, Miss Lewis."

"You mistake, sir," replied Anne, in a cold, proud tone, drawing her head a little up. "I am Lady Tenby."

Walking forward, she put her arm within her husband's, who waited for her. Mr. Angerstyne understood it at once; it needed not the almost bridal robes of white silk and lace to enlighten him. She was not altered. She looked just the same single-minded, honest-hearted girl as ever, with a pleasant word for all—save just in the moment when she had spoken to him.

"I am glad of it: she deserves her good fortune," he thought heartily. With all his faults, few men could be more generously just than Henry Angerstyne.

CHARLES VAN RHEYN.

I SHALL always say it was a singular thing that I should chance to go back to school that time the day before the quarter opened. Singular, because I heard and saw more of the boy I am going to tell of than I otherwise might have heard and seen. I was present at his arrival; and I was present at his—well, let us say, at his departure.

The midsummer holidays were nearly up when Hugh was taken ill. Duffham was uncertain what the illness was going to be: so he pitched upon scarlatina. Upon that, the Squire and Mrs. Todhetley packed me back to school there and then. Not from any fear of my taking it; I had had it, and Tod too (and both of us were well again, I recollect, within a week or so); but if once the disease had really shown itself, Dr. Frost would not have liked us to return lest we might convey it to the school. Tod was in Gloucestershire. He was written to, and told not to return home, but to go straight to school.

Dr. Frost was surprised to see me. He said my coming back was quite right; and I am sure he tried to put me at ease and make me comfortable. Not a

single boy had stayed the holidays that summer, and the Doctor and I were alone. The school would open the following day, when masters and boys were alike expected to return. I had dinner with the Doctor—he usually dined late during the holidays—and we played at chess afterwards.

Breakfast was just over the next morning when the letters came in. Amid them was one from France, bearing the Rouen post-mark. Now the Doctor, learned man though he was in classics, and what not, could make nothing of French. Carrying the letter to the window, turning its pages over and back again, and staring at it through his spectacles, he at last brought it to me.

"You are a pretty good French scholar, Johnny; can you read this? I can't, I confess. But the paper's so thin, and the ink so pale, and the writing so small, I could scarcely see it if it were English."

And I had to go over it twice, before I could make it out. As he said, the ink was pale, and it was a frightfully small and cramped handwriting. The letter was dated Rouen, and was signed curtly, "Van Rheyn," French fashion, without the writer's Christian name. Monsieur Van Rheyn wrote to say, that he was about to consign his son, Charles Aberleigh Van Rheyn, to Dr. Frost's care, and that he would arrive quickly after the letter, having already departed on his journey under the charge of a "gentilhomme Anglais." It added that the son would bring credentials with him; that he spoke English, and was of partly English descent, through his mother, the late Madame Van Rheyn, *née* Aberleigh.

"Rather a summary way of consigning a pupil to

my charge," remarked Dr. Frost. "Aberleigh?—Aberleigh?" he continued, as if trying to recollect something, and bending his spectacles over the letter. "She must have been one of the Aberleighs of Upton, I should think. Perhaps Hall knows?—I have heard her mention the Aberleighs."

Ringing the bell, the housekeeper was sent for. Dr. Frost asked her what she knew of the Aberleighs of Upton.

"There's none of them left now to know, sir," answered Hall. "There never was but two—after the old mother died: Miss Aberleigh and Miss Emma Aberleigh. Good fortunes the young ladies had, sir, and both of them, I remember, married on the same day. Miss Aberleigh to Captain Scott, and Miss Emma to a French gentleman, Mosseer Von Rheyn."

"I should think, by the name, he was Dutch—or Flemish; not French," remarked the Doctor.

"Anyway, sir, he was said to be French," returned Hall. "A dark, sallow gentleman who wore a braided coat. The young ladies never came back to their home after the wedding-day, and the place was sold. Captain Scott sailed with his wife for Injee, and Mosseer Von Rheyn took Miss Emma off to his house in France."

"Do you recollect where his home was?—In what part of France?"

"No, sir. And if I did, I should never be able to speak the name. Not long ago, I heard it said that poor Miss Emma was dead—Mrs. Von Rheyn, that is. A nice quiet girl, she was."

"Then I conclude the new pupil, spoken of to me, must be the son of Monsieur Van Rheyn and Miss Emma Aberleigh," remarked the Doctor, when Hall

was dismissed. "You must help to make things pleasant for him, Johnny: it will be a change at first from his own home and country. Do you remember that other French boy we had here?"

I did. And the remembrance made me laugh. He used to lament every day that he had not a plate of soup to dine off, and say the meat was tough.

Strolling out at the front iron gates in the course of the morning, wondering how long the boys were going to be before some of them put in an appearance, I caught sight of the first. He was walking up from the Plough and Harrow Inn, and must have come by the omnibus that plied backwards and forwards between the inn and the station. The Plough and Harrow man-of-all work followed behind, carrying a large trunk.

Of all queer figures, that boy looked the queerest. I wondered who he was, and whether he could really be coming as a pupil. His trousers and vest were nankeen, his coat was a kind of open blouse, and flew out behind him like a big round tail; the hat he wore was a great big tall chimney-pot with a wide brim. Off went the hat, with a bow and a flourish of the arm, as he reached me and the gates.

"I ask your pardon, sir. This is, I believe, the pension of Mister the Doctor Frost?"

The French accent, though that was slight, the French manners, the French turn of the words told me who it was. For a minute or two I really could not answer for staring at him. He seemed to have arrived with a shaved head, as if just out of gaol, or of brain fever.

The hair was cut as closely as it could be cut, short of shaving: his face was red and round and covered with freckles: you could not have put a pin's point between them. Really and truly it was the most remarkable figure ever seen out of a picture. I could not guess his age exactly: something perhaps between twelve and fourteen. He was slender and upright, and to all appearance strong.

"I think you must be Charles Van Rheyn," I said then, holding out my hand to welcome him. "Dr. Frost is expecting you."

He put his hand into mine after a moment's hesitation, not seeming quite to understand that he might: but such a glad brightness came into his rather large and honest grey eyes, that I liked him from that hour, in spite of the clothes and the freckles and the shorn head. He had crossed to Folkestone by the night boat, he said, had come on to London, and the gentleman, who was his escort so far, had there put him into an early train to come on to his destination.

Dr. Frost was at the window, and came to the door. Van Rheyn stood still when within a yard of him, took his hat off with the most respectful air, and bowed his head down to the ground. He had evidently been brought up with a reverence for pastors and masters. The Doctor shook hands. The first thing Van Rheyn did on entering the reception parlour, was to produce from some inner pocket a large, square letter, sealed with two flaming red seals and a coat of arms; which he handed to the Doctor. It contained a draft for a good sum of money in advance of the first three months' payment, and some pages of closely-written matter in the crabbed hand of Monsieur Van

Rheyn. Dr. Frost put the pages aside to await the arrival of the French master.

"My father was unable to remit the exact amount of money for the trimestre, sir, not knowing what it would be," said young Van Rheyn. "And there will be the extra expenses besides. He will arrange that with you later."

"The end of the term would have been time enough to remit this," said the Doctor, smiling. "It is not our custom to receive payment in advance."

"It is the custom in France, sir, I assure you. And, besides, I am to you a stranger."

"Not quite a stranger altogether: I believe I know something of your mother's family," said Dr. Frost. "How came your father to fix upon my school for you?"

"My mother knew of your school, sir: she and my father used to talk of placing me at it. And an English gentleman who came lately to Rouen spoke of it—he said he knew you very well. That again put it into my father's head to send me."

It was the same Van Rheyn that they had thought —the son of Miss Emma Aberleigh. She had been dead two years.

"Are you a Protestant or a Roman Catholic?" questioned Dr. Frost.

"I am Protestant, sir: the same that my mother was. We attended the Eglise of Monsieur le Pastor Mons, of the Culte Evangélique."

The Doctor asked him if he would take anything before dinner, and he chose a glass of eau sucrée. The mal de mer had been rather strong, he said, and he had not since been able to eat.

Evidently Hall did not approve of eau sucrée. She had never made eau sucary, she said, when sent to for it. Bringing in the water and sugar, she stood by to watch Van Rheyn mix it, her face sour, her lips drawn in. I am sure it gave her pleasure, when he asked for a few drops of orange-flower water, to be able to say there was not such a thing in the house.

"This young gentleman is the son of the Miss Emma Aberleigh you once knew, Hall," spoke the Doctor, with a view no doubt to put her on good terms with the new pupil.

"Yes, sir," she answered crustily. "He favours his mamma about the eyes."

"She must have had very nice eyes," I put in.

"And so she had," said Van Rheyn, looking at me gratefully. "Thank you for saying it. I wish you could have known her!"

"And might I ask, sir, what has become of the other Miss Aberleigh?" asked Hall of Van Rheyn. "The young lady who went off to Injee with her husband on the wedding-day."

"You would say my Aunt Margaret," he rejoined. "She is quite well. She and the Major and the children will make the voyage to Europe next year."

After the eau sucrée came to an end, the Doctor turned him over to me, telling me to take care of him till dinner-time, which that day would be early. Van Rheyn said he should like to unpack his box, and we went upstairs together. Growing confidential over the unpacking, he gave me scraps of information touching his home and family, the mention of one item leading to another.

His baptismal name in full, he said, was Charles

Jean Aberleigh; his father's was Jean Marie. Their home was a très joli château close to Rouen: in five minutes you could walk thither. It was all much changed since his mother died (he seemed to have loved her with a fervent love and to revere her memory); the last thing he did on coming away for England was to take some flowers to her grave. It was thought in Rouen that his father was going to make a second marriage with one of the Demoiselles de Tocqueville, whom his Aunt Claribelle did not like. His Aunt Claribelle, his father's sister, had come to live at the château, when his mother died; but if that Thérèsine de Tocqueville came into the house she would quit it. The Demoiselles de Tocqueville had hardly any *dot*,—which would be much against the marriage, Aunt Claribelle thought, and bad for his father; because when he, Charles, should be the age of twenty-one, the money came to him; it had been his mother's and was so settled: and his father's own property was but small. Of course he should wish his father to keep always as much as he pleased, but Aunt Claribelle thought the English trustees would not allow that. Aunt Claribelle's opinion was, that his father at length decided to send him to a pension in England while he made the marriage; but he (Charles) knew that his mother had wished him to finish his education in England and to go to one of the two colleges to which English gentlemen went.

"Here comes old Fontaine," I interrupted at this juncture, seeing his arrival from the window.

Van Rheyn looked up from his shirts, which he was counting. He seemed to have the tidiest ways in the world. "Who is it that you say? Fontaine?"

"Monsieur Fontaine, the French master. You can talk away with him in your native tongue as much as you will, Van Rheyn."

"But I have come here to speak the English tongue, not the French," debated he, looking at me seriously. "My father wishes me to speak and read it without any strange accent; and I wish it also."

"You speak it very well already."

"But you can hear that it is not my native tongue —that I am the foreigner."

"Yes."

"Well, I must learn to speak it without that—as the English do. It will be necessary."

I supposed he might allude to his future life. "What are you to be, Van Rheyn?" I inquired.

"What profession, do you ask? I need not be any: I have enough fortune to be a rentier—I don't know what you call that in English; it means a gentleman who lives on his money. But I wish, myself, to be an English priest."

"An English priest! Do you mean a parson?"

"Yes, I mean that. So you see I must learn the English tongue. My mother used to talk to me about the priests in her land——"

"Parsons, Van Rheyn."

"I beg your pardon: I forget. And I fear I have much caught up the French names for things since my mother died. It was neither priest nor parson she used to call the English ministers."

"Clergymen, perhaps."

"That was it. She said the clergymen were good men, and she should like me to be one clergyman. In winter, when it was cold, and she had some fire in

her chamber, I used to sit up there with her, after coming home from classe, and we talked together, our two selves. I should have much money, she said, when I grew to be a man, and could lead an idle life. But she would not like that: she wanted me to be a good man, and to go to heaven when I died, where she would be; and she thought if I were a clergyman I should have serious thoughts always. So I wish to be one clergyman."

He said all this with the utmost simplicity and composure, just as he might have spoken of going for a ride. There could be no mistake that he was of a thoroughly straightforward and simple-minded nature.

"It might involve your living over here, Van Rheyn: once you were in Orders."

"Yes, I know. Papa would not mind. England was mamma's country, and she loved it. There was more peace in England than in France, she thought."

"I say, she must have been a good mother, Van Rheyn."

In a moment his grey eyes were shining at me through a mist of tears. "Oh, she was so good, so good! You can never know. If she had lived I should never have had sorrow."

"What did she die of?"

"Ah, I cannot tell. She was well in the morning, and she was dead at night. Not that she was strong ever. It was one Dimanche. We had been to the office, she and I——"

"What office?"

"Oh, pardon—I forget I am speaking English. I mean to church. Monsieur Mons had preached; and we were walking along the street towards home after-

wards, mamma talking to me about the sermon, which had been a very holy one, when we met the Aunt Claribelle, who had come into the town for high mass at St. Ouen. Mamma asked her to come home and dine with us: and she said yes, but she must first go to say bon-jour to old Madam Soubités. As she parted from us, there was suddenly a great outcry. It was fête at Rouen that Sunday. Some bands of music were to play on the estrade in the public garden, competing for a prize, consequently the streets were crowded. We looked back at the noise, and saw many horses, without riders, gallopping along towards us; men were running after them, shouting and calling; and the people, mad with fright, tumbled over one another in the effort to get away. Later, we heard that these horses, frightened by something, had broken out of an hotel post-yard. Well, mamma gave just a cry of fear and held my hand tighter, as we set off to run with the rest, the horses stamping wildly after us. But the people pushed between us, and I lost her. She was at home before me, and was sitting on the side of the fountain, inside the château entrance-gate, when I got up, her face all white and blue, and her neck and throat beating, as she clung to the nearest lion with both hands. It alarmed me more than the horses had, for I had never seen her look so. 'Come in, mamma,' I said, 'and take a little glass of cordial;' but she could not answer me, she did not stir. I called one of the servants, and by-and-by she got a little breath again, and went into the house leaning upon both of us, and so up to her chamber. Quite immediately papa came home: he always went into town to his club on the Sunday mornings, and he ran

for Monsieur Petit, the médicin—the doctor. By seven o'clock in the evening, mamma was dead."

"Oh dear! What was the cause?"

"Papa did not tell me. He and Monsieur Petit talked about the heart: they said it was feeble. Oh, how we cried, papa and I! He cried for many days.——I hope he will not bring home Thérèsine de Tocqueville!"

The dinner-bell rang out, and we went down. Dr. Frost was putting up the letter, which old Fontaine had been translating to him. It was full of directions about Van Rheyn's health. What he was to do, and what not to do. Monsieur Van Rheyn said his son was not strong: he was not to be allowed to do the gymnastics, or the "boxing," or to play at rough games, or take violent exercise of any kind; and a small glass of milk was to be given him at night when he went to bed. If the clothes sent over with him were not suitable to the school, or in accordance with the English mode, Dr. Frost was prayed to be at the trouble of procuring him new ones. He was to be brought well on in all the studies necessary to constitute the "gentilhomme," and especially in the speaking and reading of English.

Dr. Frost directed his spectacles to Charles Van Rheyn, examining him from top to toe. The round, red face, and the strongly-built frame appeared to give nothing but indications of robust health. The Doctor questioned him in what way he was not strong—whether he was subject to a cough, or to want of appetite, and other such items. But Van Rheyn seemed to know nothing about it, and said he had always been quite well.

"The father fears we should make him into a muscular Englishman, hence these restrictions," thought Dr. Frost.

In the afternoon, the fellows began to come in, thick and threefold: Tod amidst them, who arrived about tea-time. To describe their amazement when they saw Van Rheyn is quite beyond me. It seemed that they never meant to leave off staring. Some of them gave him a little chaff, even that first night. Van Rheyn was very shy and silent. Entirely at his ease as he had been with me alone, the numbers seemed to daunt him; to strike him and his courage into himself.

On the whole, Van Rheyn was not liked. Once let a school set itself against a new fellow at first—and Van Rheyn's queer appearance had done that much for him—it takes a long while to bring matters around—if they ever are brought round. When his hair began to sprout, it looked exactly like pig's bristles. And that was the first nickname he got: Bristles. The Doctor had soon changed his style of coat, and he wore jackets, as we did.

Charles Van Rheyn did not seem inclined to grow sociable. Shy and silent as he had shown himself to them that first evening, so he remained. True, he got no encouragement to be otherwise. The boys threw ridicule on him continually, making him into an almost perpetual butt. Any mistake in the pronunciation of an English word—Van Rheyn never made a mistake as to its *meaning*—they hissed, and groaned, and shouted at. I shall never forget one. Being asked

when that Indian lot intended to arrive (meaning the Scotts), and whether they would make the voyage in a palanquin (for the boys plied him with questions purposely), he answered, "Not in a palanquin, but in a sheep"—meaning ship. The uproar at that was so loud, that some of the masters looked in to know what was up.

Van Rheyn, too, was next door to helpless. He did not climb, or leap, or even run. Had not been used to it, he said. What *had* he been used to do, then, he was asked one day. Oh, he had sat out in the garden with his mother; and since her death, with Aunt Claribelle, and gone for an airing in the carriage three times a week. Was he a girl? roared the boys. Did he sew patchwork? Not now; he had left off sewing when he was nine, answered Van Rheyn innocently, unconscious of the storm of mockery the avowal would invoke. "Pray, were you born a young lady?—or did they change you at nurse?" shouted Jessup, who would have kept the ball rolling till midnight. "I say, you fellows, he has come to the wrong school: we don't take in girls, we don't. Let me introduce this one to you, boys—'Miss Charlotte.'" And, so poor Charley Van Rheyn got that nickname as well as the other. Miss Charlotte!

Latin was a stumbling-block. Van Rheyn had learnt it according to French rules and French pronunciation, and he could not readily get into our English mode. "It was bad enough to have to teach a stupid boy Latin," grumbled the under Latin master (under Dr. Frost), "but worse to have to un-teach him." Van Rheyn was not stupid, however; if he seemed so, it was because his new life was so strange to him.

One day the boys dared him to a game at leap-frog. Some of them were at it in the yard, and Van Rheyn stood by, looking on.

"Why don't you go in for it?" suddenly asked Parker, giving him a push. "There is to be a round or two at boxing this evening, why don't you go in for *that?*"

"They never would let me do these rough things," replied Van Rheyn, who invariably answered all the chaffing questions civilly and patiently.

"Who wouldn't? Who's 'they'?"

"My mother and my Aunt Claribelle. Also, when I was starting to come here, my father said I was not to exert myself."

"All right, Miss Charlotte; but why on earth did not the respectable old gentleman send you over in petticoats? Never was such a thing heard of, you know, as for a girl to wear a coat and pantaloons. It's not decent, Miss Charlotte; it's not modest."

"Why you say all this to me for ever? I am not a girl," said poor Van Rheyn.

"No? don't tell fibs. If you were not a girl you'd go in for our games. Come! Try this. Leap-frog's especially edifying, I assure you: expands the mind. *Won't* you try it?"

Well, the upshot was, that they dared him to try it. A dozen, or so, set on at him like so many wolves. What with that, and what with their stinging ridicule, poor Van Rheyn was goaded out of his obedience to home orders, and did try it. After a few tumbles, he went over very tolerably, and did not dislike it at all.

"If I can only learn to do as the rest of you do, perhaps they will let me alone," he said to me that

same night, a kind of hopeful eagerness in his bright grey eyes.

And gradually he did learn to go in for most of the games: running, leaping, and climbing. One thing he absolutely refused—wrestling.

"Why should gentlemen, who were to be gentlemen all their lives, fight each other?" he asked; "they would not have to fight as men; it was not kind; it was not pleasant; it was hard."

The boys were hard on him for saying it, mocking him frightfully; but they could not shake him there. He was of right blue blood; never caving-in before them, as Bill Whitney expressed it one day; he was only quiet; and *endured.*

Whether the native Rouen air is favourable to freckles, I don't know; but those on Van Rheyn's face gradually disappeared over here. The complexion lost its redness also, becoming fresh and fair, with a brightish colour on the cheeks. The hair, getting longer, turned out to be of a smooth brown: altogether he was good-looking.

"I say, Johnny, do you know Van Rheyn's ill?"

The words came from William Whitney. He whispered them in my ear as we stood up for prayers before breakfast. The school had opened about a month then.

"What's the matter with him?"

"Don't know," answered Bill. "He is staying in bed."

Cribbing some minutes from breakfast, I went up to his room. Van Rheyn looked pale as he lay, and said he had been sick. Hall declared it was nothing

but a bilious attack, and Van Rheyn thought she might be right.

"Meaning that you have a sick headache, I suppose?" I said to him.

"Yes, the migraine. I have had it before."

"Well, look here, Charley," I went on, after thinking a minute; "if I were you, I'd not say as much to any of them. Let them suppose you are regularly ill. You'll never hear the last of it if they know you lie in bed for only a headache."

"But I cannot get up," he answered; "my head is in much pain. And I have the fever. Feel my hand."

The hand he put out was burning hot. But that went with sick headaches sometimes.

It turned out to be nothing worse, for he was well on the morrow; and I need not have mentioned it at all, but for a little matter that arose out of the day's illness. Going up again to see him after school in the afternoon, I found Hall standing over the bed with a cup of tea, and a most severe, not to say horror-struck, expression of countenance, as she gazed down on him, staring at something with all her eyes. Van Rheyn was asleep, and looked better; his face flushed and moist, his brown hair, still uncommonly short compared with ours, pushed back. He lay with his hands outside the bed, as if the clothes were heavy—the weather was fiery hot. One of the hands was clasping something that hung round his neck by a narrow blue ribbon; it seemed to have been pulled by him out of the opening in his night-shirt. Hall's quick eyes had detected what it was—a very small, flat cross (hardly

two inches long), on which was carved a figure of the Saviour, all in gold.

Now Hall had doubtless many virtues. One of them was docking us boys of our due allowance of sugar. But she had also many prejudices. And, of all her prejudices, none was stronger than her abhorrence of idols, as exemplified in carved images and Chinese gods.

"Do you see that, Master Ludlow?" she whispered to me, pointing her finger straight at the little cross of gold. "It's no better than a relict of paganism."

Stooping down, she gently drew the cross out of Van Rheyn's hot-clasped hand, and let it lie on the sheet. A beautiful little cross it was: the face of our Saviour—an exquisite face in its expression of suffering and patient humility—one that you might have gazed upon and been the better for. How they could have so perfectly carved a thing so small, I knew not.

"He must be one of them worshipping Romanics," said Hall with horror, snatching her fingers from the cross as if she thought it would give her the ague. "Or else a pagan."

And the two were no doubt alike in Hall's mind.

"And he goes every week and says his commandments in class here, a-standing up afore all the school! I wonder what the Doctor——"

Hall cut short her complaints. Van Rheyn had suddenly opened his eyes, and was looking up at us.

"I find myself better," he said with a smile. "The pain has mostly departed."

"We wasn't thinking of pains and headaches. Master Van Rheyn, but of *this*," said Hall resentfully, taking the spoon out of the saucer, and holding it

within an inch of the gold cross. Van Rheyn raised his head from the pillow to look.

"Oh, it is my little cross!" he said, holding it out to our view as far as the ribbon allowed, and speaking with perfect ease and unconcern. "Is it not beautiful?"

"Very," I said, stooping over it.

"Be you of the Romanic sex?" demanded Hall of Van Rheyn.

"Am I—— What is it Mistress Hall would ask?" he broke off to question me, in the midst of my burst of laughter.

"She asks if you are a Roman Catholic, Van Rheyn."

"But no. Why you think that?" he added to her. "My father is the Roman Catholic: I am the Protestant, like my mother."

"Then why on earth, sir, do you wear such a idol as that?" returned Hall.

"This? Oh, it is nothing! it is not an idol. It does me good."

"Good!" fiercely repeated Hall. "Does you good to wear a brazen image next the skin!——right under the flannel waistcoat. I wonder what the school will come to next!"

"Why should I not wear it?" said Van Rheyn. "What harm does it to me, this? It was my poor Aunt Annette's. The last time we went to the Aunt Claribelle's to see her, when the hope of her was gone, she put the cross into my hand, and bade me keep it for her sake."

"I tell you, Master Van Rheyn, it's just a brazen image," persisted Hall.

"It is a keepsake," dissented Van Rheyn. "I showed it to Monsieur Mons one day when he was calling on mamma, and told him it was the gift to me of the poor Tante Annette. Monsieur Mons thought it very pretty, and said it would remind me of the great Sacrifice."

"But to wear it again' your skin!" went on Hall, not giving in. Giving in on the matter of graven images was not in her nature. Or on any matter, as far as that went, that concerned us boys. "I've heard of poor misdeluded people putting horse-hair next 'em. And fine torment it must be!"

"I have worn it since mamma died," quietly answered Van Rheyn, who seemed not to understand Hall's zeal. "She kept it for me always in her little shell-box that had the silver crest on it; but when she died, I said I would put the cross round my neck, for fear of losing it: and Aunt Claribelle, who took the shell-box then, bought me the blue ribbon."

"That blue ribbon's new—or a'most new—if ever I saw new ribbon," cried Hall, who was in a mood to dispute every word.

"Oh yes. It was new when I left Rouen. I have another piece in my trunk to put on when this shall wear out."

"Well, it's a horrid heathenish thing to do, Master Van Rheyn; and, though it may be gold, I don't believe Miss Emma Aberleigh would ever have gave countenance to it. Leastways afore she lived among them foreign Frenchfolks," added Hall, virtually dropping the contest, as Van Rheyn slipped the cross out of view within his night-shirt. "What she might have come to, after she went off there, heaven alone

knows. Be you a-going to drink this tea, sir, or be you not?"

Van Rheyn drank the tea and thanked her gratefully for bringing it, the gratitude shining also out of his nice grey eyes. Hall took back the cup and tucked him up again, telling him to get a bit more sleep and he would be all right in the morning. With all her prejudices and sourness, she was as good as gold when any of us were ill.

"Not bathe! Not bathe! I say, you fellows, here's a lark. Bristles thinks he'd better not try the water."

It was a terribly hot evening, close upon sunset. Finding ourselves, some half-dozen of us, near the river, Van Rheyn being one, the water looked too pleasant not to be plunged into. The rule at Dr. Frost's was, that no boy should be compelled to bathe against his inclination: Van Rheyn was the only one who had availed himself of it. It was Parker who spoke: we were all undressing quickly.

"What's your objection, Miss Charlotte? Girls bathe."

"They would never let me go into cold water at home," was the patient answer. "We take warm baths there."

"Afraid of cold water! well, I never! What an everlasting big pussy-cat you are, Miss Charlotte! We've heard that pussies don't like to wet their feet."

"Our doctor at Rouen used to say I must not plunge into cold water," said poor Van Rheyn, speaking patiently as usual, though he must have been

nearly driven wild. "The shock would not be good for me."

"I say, who'll write off to Evesham for a pair of water-proofs to put over his shoes? Just give us the measure of your foot, Miss Charlotte?"

"Let's shut him up in a feather-bed!"

"Why, the water's not cold, you donkey!" cried out Bill Whitney, who had just leaped in. "It's as warm as new milk. What on earth will you be fit for, Bristles? You'll never make a man."

"Make a man! What are you thinking of, Whitney? Miss Charlotte has no ambition that way. Girls prefer to grow up into young ladies, not into men."

"Is it truly warm?" asked Van Rheyn, gazing at the river irresolutely, and thinking that if he went in the mockery might cease.

I looked up at him from the water. "It is indeed, Van Rheyn. Quite warm."

He knew he might trust me, and began slowly to undress. We had continued to be the best of comrades, and I never went in for teasing him as the rest did; rather shielded him when I could, and took his part.

By the time he was ready to go in—for he did nothing nimbly, and the undoing his buttons made no exception—some of us were ready to come out. One of Dr. Frost's rules in regard to bathing was stringent —that no boy should remain in the water more than three minutes at the very extent. He held that a great deal of harm was done by prolonged bathing. Van Rheyn plunged in—and liked it.

"It is warm and pleasant," he exclaimed. "This cannot hurt me."

"Hurt you, you great baby!" shouted Parker.

Van Rheyn had put his clothes in the tidiest manner upon the grass; not like ours, which were flung down any way, waistcoats here, stockings yonder. His things were laid smoothly one upon another, in the order he took them off—the jacket first, the flannel waistcoat uppermost. Though I daresay I should not have noticed this but for a shout from Jessup.

"Halloa! What's that?"

Those of us who were out, and in the several stages of drying or dressing, turned round at the words. Jessup, buttoning his braces, was standing by Van Rheyn's heap, looking down at it. On the top of the flannel singlet, exposed to full view, lay the gold cross with the blue ribbon.

"What on earth *is* it?" cried Jessup, picking it up; and at the moment Van Rheyn, finding all the rest out of the water, came out himself. "Is it a charm?"

"It is mine—it is my gold cross," spoke Van Rheyn, catching up one of the wet towels to rub himself with. The bath this evening had been impromptu, and we had but two towels between us, that Parker and Whitney had brought. In point of fact, it had been against rules also, for we were not expected to go into the river without the presence of a master. But just at this bend it was perfectly safe. Jessup passed the blue ribbon round his neck, letting the cross hang behind. This done, he turned himself about for general inspection, and the boys crowded round to look.

"What do you say it is, Bristles?"

"My gold cross."

"You don't mean to tell us to our faces that you wear it?"

"I wear it always," freely answered Van Rheyn.

Jessup took it off his neck, and the boys passed it about from one to another. They did not ridicule the cross—I think the emblem on it prevented that—but they ridiculed Van Rheyn.

"A friend of mine went over to the tar-and-feather islands," said Millichip, executing an aggravating war-dance round about Charley. "He found the natives sporting no end of charms and amulets—nearly all the attire they did sport—rings in the nose and chains in the ears. What relation are those natives to you, Miss Charlotte?"

"Don't injure it, please," pleaded Van Rheyn.

"We've got an ancient nurse at home that carries the tip of a calf's tongue in her pocket for luck," shrieked out Thorne. "And I've heard—I *have* heard, Bristles—that any fellow who arms himself with a pen'orth of blue-stone from the druggist's, couldn't have the yellow jaundice if he tried. What might you wear this for, pray?"

"My Aunt Annette gave it me as a present when she was dying," answered poor helpless Charley, who had never the smallest notion of taking the chaff otherwise than seriously, or of giving chaff back again.

He had dressed himself to his trousers and shirt, and stood with his hand stretched out, waiting for his cross.

"In the Worcester Journal, one day last June, I read an advertisement as big as a house, offering a child's caul for sale," cried Snepp. "Any gentleman or lady buying that caul and taking it to sea, could

never be drowned. Bristles thinks as long as he wears this, he'll not come to be hanged."

"How's your grandmother, Miss Charlotte?"

"I wish you would please to let me alone," said he patiently. "My father would not have placed me here had he known."

"Why don't you write and tell him, Bristles?"

"I would not like to grieve him," simply answered Charley. "I can bear. And he does so much want me to learn the good English."

"This cross is gold, I suppose?" said Bill Whitney, who now had it.

"Yes, it is gold," answered Van Rheyn.

"I'd not advise you to fall amid thieves, then. They might ease you of it. The carving must be worth something."

"It cost a great deal to buy, I have heard my aunt say. Will you be so good as to give it me, that I may finish to dress myself?"

Whitney handed him the cross. Time was up, in fact; and we had to make a race for the house. Van Rheyn was catching it hot and sharp, all the way.

One might have thought that his very meekness, the non-resisting spirit in which he took things, would have disarmed the mockery. But it did not. Once go in wholesale for putting upon some particular fellow in a school, and the fun gains with use. I don't think any of them meant to be really unkind to Van Rheyn; but the play had begun, and they enjoyed it.

I once saw him drowned in tears. It was at the dusk of evening. Charley had come in for it awfully at tea-time, I forget what about, and afterwards disap-

peared. An hour later, going into Whitney's room for something Bill asked me to fetch, I came upon Charles Van Rheyn—who also slept there. He was sitting at the foot of his low bed, his cheek leaning on one of his hands, and the tears running down swiftly. One might have thought his heart was broken.

"What is the grievance, Charley?"

"Do not say to them that you saw me," returned he, dashing away his tears. "I did not expect any of you would come up."

"Look here, old fellow: I know it's rather hard lines for you just now. But they don't mean anything: it is done in sport, not malice. They don't *think*, you see, Van Rheyn. You will be sure to live it down."

"Yes," he sighed, "I hope I shall. But it is so different here from what it used to be. I had the happy home; I never had one sorrow when my mother was alive. Nobody cares for me now; nobody is kind to me: it is a great change."

"Take heart, Charley," I said, holding out my hand. "I know you will live it down in time."

Of all the fellows I ever met, I think he was the most grateful for a word of kindness. As he thanked me with a glad look of hope in his eyes, I saw that he had been holding the cross clasped in his palm; for it dropped as he put his hand into mine.

"It helps me to bear," he said, in a whisper. "My mother, who loved me so, is in Heaven; my father has married Mademoiselle Thérèsine de Tocqueville. I have no one now."

"Your father has not married that Thérèsine de Tocqueville!"

"But, yes. I had the letter close after dinner."

So perhaps he was crying for the home unhappiness as much as for his school grievances. It all reads strange, no doubt, and just the opposite of what might be expected of one of us English boys. The French bringing-up is different from ours: perhaps it lay in that. On the other hand, a French boy, generally speaking, possesses a very shallow sense of religion. But Van Rheyn had been reared by his English mother; and his disposition seemed to be naturally serious and uncommonly pliable and gentle. At any rate, whether it reads improbable or probable, it is the truth.

I got what I wanted for Bill Whitney, and went down, thinking what a hard life it was for him—what a shame that we made it so. Indulged, as Van Rheyn must have always been, tenderly treated as a girl, sheltered from the world's roughness, all that coddling must have become to him as second nature; and the remembrance lay with him still. Over here, he was suddenly cut off from it, thrown into another and a rougher atmosphere, isolated from country, home, home-ties, and associations; and compelled to stand the daily brunt of this petty tyranny.

Getting Tod apart that night, I put the matter to him: what a shame it was, and how sorry I felt for Charley Van Rheyn; and I asked him whether he thought he could not (he having a great deal of weight in the school) make things pleasanter for him. Tod responded that I should never be anything but a muff, and that the roasting Van Rheyn got treated to was superlatively good for him, if ever he was to be made into a man.

However, before another week ran out, Dr. Frost

interfered. How he obtained an inkling of the reigning politics we never knew. One Saturday afternoon, when old Fontaine had taken Van Rheyn out with him, the Doctor walked into the midst of us, to the general consternation.

Standing in the centre of the schoolroom, with a solemn face, all of us backing as much as the wall allowed, and those of the masters who chanced to be present rising to their feet, the Doctor spoke of Van Rheyn. He had reason to suspect, he said, that we were doing our best to worry Van Rheyn's life out of him: and he put the question deliberately to us (and made us answer it), how we, if consigned alone to a foreign home, all its inmates strangers, would like to be served so. He did not wish, he went on, to think he had pitiful, ill-disposed boys, lacking hearts and common kindness, in his house: he felt sure that what had passed arose from a heedless love of mischief; and it would greatly oblige him to find from henceforth that our conduct to Van Rheyn was changed: he thought, and hoped, that he had only to express a wish upon the point, to ensure obedience.

With that—and a hearty nod and smile around, as if he put it as a personal favour to himself, and wanted us to see that he did, and was not angry, he went out again. A counsel was held to determine whether we had a sneak among us—else how could Frost have known?—that Charley himself had not spoken, his worst enemy felt sure of. But not one could be pitched upon: every individual fellow, senior and junior, protested earnestly that he had not let out a syllable. And, to tell the truth, I don't think we had.

However, the Doctor was obeyed. From that day

all real annoyance to Charles Van Rheyn ceased. I don't say but what there would be a laugh at him now and then, and a word of raillery, or that he lost his names of Bristles and Miss Charlotte; but virtually the sting was gone. Charley was as grateful as could be, and seemed to become quite happy; and upon the arrival of a hamper by grande vitesse from Rouen, containing a huge rich wedding-cake and some packets of costly sweet-meats, he divided the whole amid us, keeping the merest taste for himself. The school made its comments in return.

"He's not a bad lot after all, that Van Rheyn. He will make a man yet."

"It isn't a bit of use your going in for this, Van Rheyn, unless you can run like a lamp-lighter."

"But I can run, you know," responded Van Rheyn.

"Yes. But can you keep the pace up?"

"Why not?"

"We may be out for three or four hours, pelting like mad all the time."

"I feel no fear of keeping up," said Van Rheyn. "I will go."

"All right."

It was on a Saturday afternoon; and we were turning out for hare and hounds. The quarter was hard upon its close, for September was passing. Van Rheyn had never seen hare and hounds: it had been let alone during the hotter weather: and it was Tod who now warned him that he might not be able to keep up the running. It requires fleet legs and easy breath, as

everybody knows; and Van Rheyn had never much exercised either.

"What is just the game?" he asked in his quaintly-turned phrase. And I answered him—for Tod had gone away.

"You see those strips of paper that they have torn out of old copy-books, and are twisting? That is for the scent. The hare fills his pockets with it, and drops a piece of it every now and then as he runs. We, the hounds, follow his course by means of the scent, and catch him if we can."

"And then?" questioned Van Rheyn.

"Then the game is over."

"And what if you not catch him?"

"The hare wins; that's all. What he likes to do is to double upon us cunningly and lead us home again after him."

"But in all that there is only running."

"We vault over the obstructions—gates, and stiles, and hedges. Or, if the hedges are too high, scramble through them."

"But some hedges are very thick and close: nobody could get through them," debated Van Rheyn, taking the words, as usual, too literally.

"Then we are dished. And have to find some other way onwards, or turn back."

"I can do what you say quite easily."

"All right, Charley," I repeated: as Tod had done. And neither of us, nor anybody else, had the smallest thought that it was not all right.

Millichip was chosen hare. Snepp turned cranky over something or other at the last moment, and

backed out of it. He made the best hare in the school: but Millichip was nearly as fleet a runner.

What with making the scent, and having it out with Snepp, time was hindered; and it must have been getting on for four o'clock when we started. Which docked the run considerably, for we had to be in at six to tea. On that account, perhaps, Millichip thought he must get over the ground the quicker; for I don't think we had ever made so swift a course. Letting the hare get on well ahead, the signal was given, and we started after him in full cry, rending the air with shouts, and rushing along like the wind.

A right-down good hare Millichip turned out to be; doubling and twisting and finessing, and exasperating the hounds considerably. About five o'clock he had made tracks for home, as we found by the scent; but we could neither see him nor catch him. Later, I chanced to come to grief in a treacherous ditch, lost my straw hat, and tore the sleeve of my jacket. This threw me behind the rest; and when I pelted up to the next stile, there stood Van Rheyn. He had halted to rest his arms on it; his breath was coming in alarming gasps, his face whiter than any sheet.

"Halloa, Van Rheyn! What's up! The pace is too much for you."

"It was my breath," said he, when the gasps allowed him to answer. "I go on now."

I put my hand on him. "Look here: the run's nearly over; we shall soon be at home. Don't go on so fast."

"But I want to be in at what they call the death."

"There'll be no death to-day: the hare's safe to win."

"I want to keep up," he answered, getting over the stile. "I said I could keep up, and do what the rest did." And off he was again, full rush.

Before us, on that side of the stile, was a tolerably wide field. The pack had wound half over it during this short halt, making straight for the entrance to the coppice at the other end. We were doing our best to catch them up, when I distinctly saw a heavy stone flung into their midst. Looking at the direction it came from, there crept a dirty raggamuffin over the ground on his hands and knees. He did not see us two behind; and he flung another heavy stone. Had it struck anyone's head it would have done serious damage.

Letting the chase go, I stole across and pounced upon him before he could get away. He twisted himself out of my hands like an eel, and stood grinning defiance and whistling to his dog. We knew the young scamp well: and could never decide whether he was a whole scamp, or a half natural. At any rate, he was vilely bad, was the pest of the neighbourhood, and had enjoyed some short sojourns in prison for trespass. Raddy was the name he went by; we knew him by no other; and how he got a living nobody could tell.

"What did you throw those stones for?"

"Shan't tell ye. Didn't throw 'em at you."

"You had better mind what you are about, Mr. Raddy, unless you want to get into trouble."

"Yah—you!" grinned Raddy.

There was nothing to be made of him; there never was anything. I should have been no match for Raddy in an encounter; and he would have killed me without

the slightest compunction. Turning to go on my way, I was in time to see Van Rheyn tumble over the stile and disappear within the coppice. The rest must have nearly shot out of its other end by that time. It was a coppice that belonged to Sir John Whitney. Once through it, we were on our own grounds, and within a field of home.

I went on leisurely enough: no good to try to catch them up now. Van Rheyn would not do it, and he had more than half a field's start of me. It must have been close upon six, for the sun was setting in a ball of fire; the amber sky around it was nearly as dazzling as the sun, and lighted up the field.

So that, plunging into the coppice, it was like going into a dungeon. For a minute or two with the reflection of that red light lingering in my eyes, I could hardly see the narrow path: the trees were dark, thick, and met overhead. I ran along whistling: wondering whether that young Raddy was after me with his ugly dog; wondering why Sir John did not——

The whistling and the thoughts came to a summary close together. At the other end of the coppice, but a yard or two on this side the stile that divided it from the open field, there was Charles Van Rheyn on the ground, his back against the trunk of a tree, his arms stretched up, clasping hold of it. But for that clasp, and the laboured breath, I might have thought he was dead. For his face was ghastly to look upon, blue all round the mouth, and wore the strangest expression I ever saw.

"Charley, what's the matter?"

But he could not answer. He was panting frightfully, as though every gasp would be his last. What

on earth was I to do? Down I knelt, saying never another word.

"It—gives—me—much—hurt," said he, at length, with a long pause between every word.

"What does?"

"Here"—pointing to his chest—towards the left side.

"Did you hurt yourself?—Did you fall?"

"No, I not hurt myself. I fall because I not able to run more. It is the breath. I wish papa was near me!"

Instinct told me that he must have assistance and yet I did not like to leave him. But what if delay in getting it should be dangerous? I rose up to go.

"You—you not going to quit me!" he cried out, putting his feeble grasp on my arm.

"But, Charley, I want to get somebody to you," I said in an agony. "I can't do anything for you myself: anything in the world."

"No, you stay. I not like to be alone if I die."

The shock the word gave me I can recall yet. Die! If there was any fear of *that*, it was all the more necessary I should make a rush for Dr. Frost and Featherston. Never had I been so near my wit's end before, in the uncertainty as to what course I ought to take.

All in a moment, there arose a shrill whistle on the other side the stile. It was like a god-send. I knew it quite well for that vicious young reptile's, but it was welcome to me as sunshine in harvest.

"There's Raddy, Van Rheyn. I will send him."

Vaulting over the stile, I saw the young man standing with his back to me near the hedge, his wretched

outer garment—a sack without shape—hitched up, his hands in the pockets of his dilapidated trousers, that hung in fringes below the knee. He was whistling to his dog in the coppice. They must have struck through the tangles and briars higher up, which was a feat of difficulty, and strictly forbidden by law. It was well Sir John's agent did not see Mr. Raddy—whose eyes, scratched and bleeding, gave ample proof of the trespass.

"Yah!—yah!" he shrieked out, turning at the sound of me, and grinning fresh defiance.

"Raddy," I said, speaking in a persuasive tone to propitiate him in my great need, "I want you to do something for me. Go to Dr. Frost as quickly as you are able, and say——"

Of all the derisive horrible laughs, his interrupting one was the worst and loudest. It drowned the words.

"One of the school has fallen and hurt himself," I said, putting it in that way. "He's lying here, and I cannot leave him. Hush, Raddy! I want to tell you," —advancing a step or two nearer to him and lowering my voice to a whisper,—"I think he is dying."

"None o' yer gammon here; none o' yer lies"—and in proportion as I advanced, he retreated. "You've got a ambush in that there coppy—all the spicy lot on ye a-waiting to be down on me and serve me out! Just you try it on!"

"I am telling you the truth, Raddy. There's not a soul in there but the one I speak of. I say I fear he is dying. He is lying down helpless. I will pay you to go"—feeling in my pockets to see how much I had there.

Raddy displayed his teeth: it was a trick of his

when feeling particularly defiant. "What'll yer pay me?"

"Sixpence"—showing it to him. "I will give it you when you have taken the message."

"Give it first."

Just for a moment I hesitated in my extremity of need, but I knew it would be only the sixpence thrown away. Paid beforehand, Raddy would no more do the errand than he'd fly. I told him as much.

"Then, be dashed if I go!" And he passed off into a round of swearing.

Good heavens! if I should not be able to persuade him! If Charles Van Rheyn should die for lack of help!

"Did you ever have anybody to care for, Raddy? Did you ever have a mother?"

"Her's sent over the seas, her is; and I be glad on't. Her beated of me, her did: I warn't a-going to stand that."

"If you ever had anybody you cared for the least bit in the world, Raddy; if you ever did anybody a good turn in all your life, you will help this poor fellow now. Come and look at him. See whether I dare leave him."

"None o' yer swindles! Ye wants to get me in there, ye does. Yah! I warn't borned yesterday."

Well, it seemed hopeless. "Will you go for the sixpence, if I give it to you beforehand, Raddy?"

"Give it over, and see. Where the thunder have ye been?" dealing his dog a savage kick, as it came up, barking. "Be I to whistle ye all day, d'ye think?" Another kick.

I had found two sixpences in my pocket; all its store. Bringing forth one, I held it out to him.

"Now listen, Raddy. I give you this sixpence now. You are to run with all your might to the house —and you can run, you know, like the wind. Say that I sent you—you know my name, Johnny Ludlow —sent you to tell them that the French boy is in the coppice dying:" for I thought it best to put it strong. "Dr. Frost, or some of them, must come to him at once, and they must send off for Mr. Featherston. You can remember that. The French boy, mind."

"I could remember it if I tried."

"Well, I'll give you the sixpence. And, look here —here's another sixpence. It is all the money I have. That shall be yours also, when you have done the errand."

I slipped one of the sixpences back into my pocket, holding out the other. But I have often wondered since that he did not stun me with a blow, and take the two. Perhaps he could not entirely divest himself of that idea of the "ambush." I did not like the leering look on his false face as he sidled cautiously up towards the sixpence.

"Take a look at him; you can see him from the stile," I said, closing my hand over the sixpence while I spoke; "convince yourself that he is there, and that no trickery is meant. And, Raddy," I added, slowly opening the hand again, "perhaps you may want help one of these days yourself in some desperate need. Do this good turn for him, and the like will be done for you."

I tossed him the sixpence. He stole cautiously to the stile, making a wide circuit round me to do it, glanced at Van Rheyn, and then made straight off in the right direction as fast as his legs would carry him, the dog barking at his heels.

Van Rheyn was better when I got back to him; his breathing easier, the mouth less blue; and his arms were no longer up, clutching the tree-trunk. Nevertheless, there was that in his face that gave me an awful fear and made my breath for a moment nearly as short as his. I sat down beside him, letting him lean against me, as well as the tree, for better support.

"Are you afraid, Charley? I hope they'll not be long."

"I am not afraid with this," he answered with a happy smile—and, opening his hand, I saw the little cross clasped in it.

Well, that nearly did for me. It was as though he meant to imply he knew he was dying, and was not afraid to die. And he did mean it.

"You not comprehend?" he added, mistaking the look of my face—which no doubt was desperate. "I have kept the Saviour with me here, and he will keep me with Him there."

"Oh——but Charley! You *can't* think you are going to die."

"Yes, I feel so," he answered quite calmly. "My mother said, that last Sunday, I might not be long after her. She drew me close to her, and held my hand, and her tears were falling with mine. It was then she said it."

"Oh, Charley! how can I help you?" I cried out in my pain and dread. "If I could but do something for you!"

"I would like to give you this," he said, half opening his hand again, as it rested on his breast, just to show me the cross. "My mother has seen how good you have always been for me: she said she should

look down, if permitted, to watch for me till I came. Would you please keep it to my memory?"

The hardest task I'd ever had in my life was to sit there. To sit there quietly—helpless. Dying! And I could do nothing to stay him! Oh, why did they not come? If I could but have run somewhere, or done something!

In a case like this the minutes seem as long as hours. Dr. Frost was up sooner than could have been hoped for by the watch, and Featherston with him. Raddy did his errand well. Chancing to see the surgeon pass down the road as he was delivering the message at the house, he ran and arrested him. Putting his ill-looking face over the stile, as they came up, I flung him the other sixpence, and thanked him too. The French master came running; others came: I hardly saw who they were, for my eyes were troubled.

The first thing that Featherston did was to open Van Rheyn's things at the throat, spread a coat on the ground and put his head flat down upon it. But oh, there could be no mistake. He was dying: nearly gone. Dr. Frost knelt down, the better to get at him, and said something that we did not catch.

"Thank you, sir," answered Van Rheyn, panting again and speaking with pain, but smiling faintly his grateful smile. "Do not be sorrowful. I shall see my mother. Sir—if you please—I wish to give my cross to Johnny Ludlow."

Dr. Frost only nodded in answer. His heart must have been full.

"Johnny Ludlow has been always good for me," he went on in his translated French. "He will guard it to my memory: a keepsake. My mother would give it

to him—she has seen that Johnny has stood by me ever since that first day."

Monsieur Fontaine spoke to him in French, and Van Rheyn answered in the same language. While giving a fond message for his father, his voice grew feeble, his face more blue, and the lids slowly closed over his eyes. Dr. Frost said something about removing him to the house, but Featherston shook his head. "Presently, presently."

"Adieu, sir," said Van Rheyn faintly to Dr. Frost, and partly opening his eyes again. "Adieu Monsieur Fontaine. Adieu, all. Johnny, say my very best adieux to the boys; say to them it has been very pleasant lately; say they have been very good comrades; and say that I shall see them all again when they come to Heaven. Will you hold my hand?"

Taking his left hand in mine—the other had the gold cross in it—I sat on beside him. The dusk was increasing, so that we could no longer very well see his features in the dark coppice. My tears were dropping fast and thick, just as his tears had dropped that evening when I found him sitting at the foot of his bed.

Well, it was over directly. He gave one long deep sigh, and then another after an interval, and all was over. It seemed like a dream then in the acting; it seems, looking back, like a dream now.

He had died from the running at Hare and Hounds. The violent exercise had been too much for the heart. We heard later that the French family doctor had suspected the heart was not quite sound; and that was the reason of Monsieur Rheyn's written restrictions on the score of violent exercise. But, as Dr. Frost angrily

observed, why did the father not distinctly warn him against that special danger: how was it to be suspected in a lad of hearty and healthy appearance? Monsieur Van Rheyn came over, and took what remained of Charles back to Rouen, to be laid beside his late wife. It was a great blow to him to lose his only son. And all the property went away from the Van Rheyn family to Mrs. Scott in India.

The school went into a state that night, when we got in from the coppice, and I gave them Van Rheyn's message. They knew something was up with him, but never suspected it could be death.

"I say, though," cried Harry Parker, in a great access of remorse, speaking up amid the general consternation, "we would never have worried him had we foreseen this. Poor Van Rheyn!"

And I have his gold cross by me this day. Sometimes, when looking at it, a fancy comes over me that he, looking down from his abode of peace in Heaven, sees it too.

SEEN IN THE MOONLIGHT.

"I TELL you it is," repeated Tod. "One cannot mistake Temple, even at a distance."

"But this man looks so much older than he. And he has whiskers. Temple had none."

"And has not Temple got older, do you suppose; and don't whiskers sprout and grow? You are always a muff, Johnny. That is Slingsby Temple."

We had gone by rail to Whitney Hall, and were walking up from the station. The Squire sent us to ask after Sir John's gout. It was a broiling hot day in the middle of summer. On the lawn before the house, with some of the Whitneys, stood a stranger; a little man, young, dark, and upright.

Tod was right, and I wrong. It was Slingsby Temple. But I thought him much altered: older-looking than his years, which numbered close upon twenty-five, and more sedate and haughty than ever. We had neither seen nor heard of him since quitting Oxford.

"Oh, he's regularly in for it this time," said Bill Whitney, in answer to inquiries about his father, as they shook hands with us. "He has hardly ever had such a bout; can only lie in bed and groan. Temple,

don't you remember Todhetley and Johnny Ludlow?"

"Yes, I do," answered Temple, holding out his hand to me first, and passing by Tod to do it. But that was Slingsby Temple's way. I was of no account, and therefore it did not touch his pride to notice me.

"I am glad to see you again," he said to Tod, cordially enough, as he turned to him; which was quite a gracious acknowledgment for Temple.

But it surprised us to see him there. The Whitneys had no acquaintance with the Temples; neither had he and Bill been particular friends at college. Whitney explained it after luncheon, when we were sitting outside the windows in the shade, and Temple was pacing the shrubbery with Helen.

"I fancy it's a gone case," said Bill, nodding towards them.

"Oh, William, you should not say it," struck in Anna, in a tone of remonstrance, and with her pretty blush. "It is not sure—and not right to Mr. Temple."

"Not say it to Tod and Johnny! Rubbish! Why, they are like ourselves, Anna. I say I think it is going to be a case."

"Helen with another beau!" cried free Tod. "How has it all come about?"

"The mother and Helen have been staying at Malvern, you know," said Whitney. "Temple turned up at the same hotel, the Foley Arms, and they struck up an intimacy. I went over for the last week, and was surprised to see how thick he was with them. The mother, who is more unsuspicious than a goose, told Temple, in her hospitable way, when they were saying good-bye, that she should be glad to see him if ever

he found himself in these benighted parts: and I'll be shot if at the end of five days he was not here! If Helen's not the magnet, I don't know what else it can be."

"He appears to like her; but it may be only a temporary fancy that will pass away; it ought not to be talked of," reiterated Anna. "It may come to nothing."

"It may, or may not," persisted Bill.

"Will she consent to have him?" I asked.

"She'd be simple if she didn't," said Bill. "Temple would be a jolly fine match for any girl. Good in all ways. His property is large, and he himself is as sober and steady as any parson. Always has been."

I was not thinking of Temple's eligibility: that was undeniable; but of Helen's inclinations. Some time before she had gone in for a love affair, which would not do at any price, caused some stir at the Hall, and came to signal grief: though I have not time to tell of it here. Whitney caught the drift of my thoughts.

"*That's* over and done with, Johnny. She'd never let its recollection spoil other prospects. You may trust Helen Whitney for that. She is as shallow-hearted as——"

"For shame, William!" remonstrated Anna.

"It's true," said he. "I didn't say *you* were. Helen would have twenty sweethearts to your one, and think nothing of it."

Tod looked at Anna, and laughed gently. Her cheeks turned the colour of the rose she was holding.

"What's this about a boating tour?" he inquired of Whitney. It had been alluded to at lunch-time.

"Temple's going in for one with some more fellows," was the reply. "He has asked me to join them. We mean to do some of the larger rivers; take our tent, and encamp on the banks at night."

"What a jolly spree!" cried Tod, his face flushing with delight. "How I should like it!"

"I wish to goodness you were coming. But Temple has made up his party. It is his affair, you know. He talks of staying out a month."

"One gets no chance in this slow place," cried Tod, fiercely. "I'll emigrate, I think, and go tiger-hunting. Is it a secret, this boating affair?"

"A secret! No."

"What made you kick me under the table, then, when I would have asked particulars at luncheon?"

"Because the mother was present. She has taken all sorts of queer notions into her head—mothers always have such—that the boat will be found bottom upwards some day, and we under it. Failing that, we are to catch colds and fevers and agues from the night encampments. So we say as little about it as possible before her."

"I see," nodded Tod. "Look here, Bill, I should like to get up a boating party myself: it sounds glorious. How do you set about it?—and where can you get a boat?"

"Temple knows," said Bill, "I don't. Let us go and ask him."

They went across the grass, leaving me alone with Anna. She and I were the best of friends, as the reader may remember, and exchanged many a little confidence with one another that the world knew nothing of.

"Should you like it for Helen?" I asked, indicating her sister and Slingsby Temple.

"Yes, I think I should," she answered. "But William was not warranted in speaking as he did. Mr. Temple will only be here a few days longer: when he leaves, we may never see him again."

"But he is evidently taken with Helen. He shows that he is. And when a man of Slingsby Temple's disposition allows himself to betray anything of the kind, rely upon it he means something."

"Did you like him at Oxford, Johnny?"

"Well—I did and did not," was my hesitating answer. "He was reserved, close, proud, and unsociable; and no man displaying those qualities can be much liked. On the other hand, he was of exemplary conduct, deserving respect from all, and receiving it."

"I think he is religious," said Anna, her voice taking a lower tone.

"Yes, I always thought him that. I fancy their mother brought them up to be so. But Temple is the last man in the world to display it."

"What with papa's taking up two rooms to himself now he has the gout, and all of us being at home, mamma was a little at fault what chamber to give Mr. Temple. There was no time for much arrangement, for he came without notice; so she just turned Harry out of his room, which used to be poor John's, you know, and put Mr. Temple there. That night Harry chanced to go up to bed later than the rest of us. He forgot his room had been changed, and went straight into his own. Mr. Temple was kneeling down in prayer, and a Bible lay open on the table. Mamma

says it is not all young men who say their prayers and read the Bible nowadays."

"Not by a good many, Anna. Yes, Temple is good, and I hope Helen will get him. She will have position, too, as his wife, and a large income."

"He comes into his estate this year, he told us; in September. He will be five-and-twenty then. But, Johnny, I don't like one thing: William says there was a report at Oxford that the Temples never live to be even middle-aged men."

"Some of them have died young, I believe. But, Anna, that's no reason why they all should."

"And — there's a superstition attaching to the family, is there not?" continued Anna. "A ghost that appears; or something of that?"

I hardly knew what to answer. How vividly the words brought back poor Fred Temple's communication to me on the subject, and his subsequent death.

"You don't speak," said she. "Won't you tell me what it is?"

"It is this, Anna: but I dare say it's all nonsense —fancy. When one of the Temples is going to die, the spirit of the head of the family who last died is said to appear and beckon to him; a warning that his own death is near. Down in their neighbourhood people call it the Temple superstition."

"I don't quite understand," cried Anna, looking earnestly at me. "*Who* is it that is said to appear?"

"I'll give you an instance. When the late Mr. Temple, Slingsby's father, was walking home from shooting with his gamekeeper one September day, he thought he saw his father in the wood at a little distance: that is, his father's spirit, for he had been dead

some years. It scared him very much at the moment, as the keeper testified. Well, Anna, in a day or two he, Mr. Temple, was dead—killed by an accident."

"I am glad I am not a Temple; I should be always fearing I might see the sight," observed Anna, a sad, thoughtful look on her gentle face.

"Oh no, you'd not, Anna. The Temples themselves don't think of it, and don't believe in it. Slingsby does not, at any rate. His brother Fred told me at Oxford that nobody must presume to allude to it in Slingsby's presence."

"Fred? He died at Oxford, did he not?"

"Yes, he died there, poor fellow. Thrown from his horse. I saw it happen, Anna."

But I said nothing to her of that curious scene to which I had been a witness a night or two before the accident—when poor Fred, to Slingsby's intense indignation, fancied he saw his father on the college staircase; fancied his father beckoned to him. It was not a thing to talk of. After that time Slingsby had seemed to regard me with a rather special favour; I wondered whether it was because I had *not* talked of it.

The afternoon passed. We went up to see Sir John in his gouty room, and then said good-bye to them all, including Temple, and started for home again. Tod was surly and cross. He had come out in a temper and he was going back in one.

Tod liked his own way. Nobody in the world resented interference more than he: and just now he and the Squire were at war. Some twelve months before, Tod had dropped into a five-hundred pound legacy from a distant relative. It was now ready to be paid

to him. The Squire wished it paid over to himself, that he might take care of it; Tod wanted to be grand, and open a banking account of his own. For the past two days the argument had held out on both sides, and this morning Tod had lost his temper. Lost it was again now, but on another score.

"Slingsby Temple might as well have invited me to join the boating lot!" he broke out to me, as we drew near home. "He knows I am an old hand."

"But if his party is made up, Tod? Whitney said it was."

"Rubbish to you, Johnny. Made up! They could as well make room for another. And much good some of them are, I dare say! I can't remember that Slingsby ever took an oar in his hand at Oxford. All he went in for was star-gazing—and chapels—and lectures. And look at Bill Whitney! He hates rowing."

"Did you tell Temple you would like to join?"

"He could see it. I didn't say in so many words, Will you let me? Of all things, I should enjoy a boating tour! It would be the most jolly thing on earth."

That night, after we got in, the subject of the money grievance cropped up again. The Squire was smoking his long churchwarden pipe at the open window; Mrs. Todhetley sat by the centre table and the lamp, hemming a strip of muslin. Tod, open as the day on all subjects, abused Temple's "churlishness" for not inviting him to make one of the boating party, and declared he'd organise one of his own, which he could readily do, now he was not tied for money. That remark set the Squire on.

"Aye, that's just where it would be, Joe," said he.

"Let you keep the money in your own fingers, and we should soon see what it would end in."

"What would it end in?" demanded Tod.

"Ducks and drakes."

Tod tossed his head. "You think I am a child still, I believe, father."

"You are no better where the spending of money's concerned," said the Squire, taking a long whiff. "Few young men are. Their fathers know that, and keep it from them as long as they can. And that's why so many are not let come into possession of their estates before they are five-and-twenty. This young Temple, it seems, does not come into his; Johnny, here, does not."

"I should like to know what more harm it would do for the money to lie in my name in the Old Bank than if it lay in yours?" argued Tod. "Should I be drawing cheques on purpose to get rid of it? That's what you seem to suppose, father."

"You'd be drawing them to spend," said the Pater.

"No, I shouldn't. It's my own money, after all. Being my own, I should take good care of it."

Old Thomas came in with some glasses, and the argument dropped. Tod began again as we were going upstairs together.

"You see, Johnny," he said, stepping inside my room on his way, and shutting the door for fear of eavesdroppers, "there's that hundred pounds I owe Brandon. The old fellow has been very good, never so much as hinting that he remembers it, and I shall pay him back the first thing. To do this, I must have exclusive possession of the money. A fine bobbery the Pater would make if he got to know of it. Besides,

a man come to my age likes to have a banking account —if he can. Good-night, lad."

Tod carried his point. He turned so restive and obstinate over it as to surprise and vex the Squire, who of course knew nothing about the long-standing debt to Mr. Brandon. The Squire had no legal power to keep the money, if Tod insisted upon having it. And he did insist. The Squire put it down to boyish folly, self-assumption; and groaned and grumbled all the way to Worcester, when Tod was taking the five-hundred pound cheque, paid to him free of duty, to the Old Bank.

"We shall have youngsters in their teens wanting to open a banking account next!" said the Pater to Mr. Isaac, as Tod was writing his signature in the book. "The world's coming to something."

"I dare say young Mr. Todhetley will be prudent, and not squander it," observed Mr. Isaac, with one of his pleasant smiles.

"Oh, will he, though! You'll see. Look here," went on the Squire, tapping the banker on the arm, "couldn't you, if he draws too large a cheque at any time, refuse to cash it?"

"I fear we could not do that," laughed Mr. Isaac. "So long as he does not overdraw his account, we are bound to honour his cheques."

"And if you do overdraw it, Joe, I hope the bank will prosecute you!—I would, I know," was the Squire's last threat, as we left the bank and turned towards the Cross, Tod with a cheque-book in his breast-pocket.

But Mr. Brandon could not be paid then. On going over to his house a day or two afterwards, we found

him from home. The housekeeper thought he was on his way to one of the "water-cure establishments," in Yorkshire, she said, but he had not yet written to give his address.

"So it must wait," remarked Tod to me as we went home. "I'm not sorry. How the bank would have stared at having to pay a hundred pounds down on the nail! Conclude, no doubt, that I was going to the deuce headlong."

"By Jove!" cried Tod, taking a leap in the air.

About a week had elapsed since the journey to the Old Bank, and Tod was opening a letter that had come addressed to him by the morning post.

"Johnny! will you believe it, lad? Temple asks me to be of the boating lot, after all."

It was even so. The letter was from Slingsby Temple, written from Templemore. It stated that he had been disappointed by some of those who were to have made up the number, and if Todhetley and Ludlow would supply their places, he should be glad.

Tod turned wild. You might have thought, as Mrs. Todhetley remarked, that he had been invited to Eden.

"The idea of Temple's asking you, Johnny!" he said. "You are of no good in a boat."

"Perhaps I had better decline?"

"No, don't do that, Johnny. It might upset the party altogether, perhaps. You must do your best."

"I have no boating suit."

"I will treat you to one," said Tod, munificently.

"We'll get it at Evesham. Pity but my things would fit you."

So it was, for he had loads of them.

The Squire, for a wonder, did not oppose the scheme. Mrs. Todhetley (like Lady Whitney) did, in her mild way. As Bill said, all mothers were alike—always foreseeing danger. And though she was not Tod's true mother, or mine either, she was just as anxious for us; and she looked upon it as nearly certain that one of us would come home drowned, and the other with the ague.

"They won't sleep on the bare ground, of course," said Duffham, who chanced to call that morning, while Tod was writing his letter of acceptance to Slingsby Temple.

"Of course we shall," fired Tod, resenting the remark. "What harm could it do us?"

"Give some of you rheumatic fever," said Duffham.

"Then why doesn't it give it to the gipsies?" retorted Tod.

"The gipsies are used to it—born to it, as one may say. You young men must have a waterproof sheet to lie upon, or a tarpaulin, or something of the sort."

Tod tossed his head, disdaining an answer, and wrote on.

"You will have plenty of rugs and great-coats with you, of course," went on Duffham. "And I'll give you a packet of quinine powders. It is as well to be prepared for contingencies. If you find any symptoms of unusual cold, or shivering, just take one or two of them."

"Look here, Mr. Duffham," said Tod, dashing his pen on the table. "Don't you think you had better attend us yourself with a medicine chest? Put up a cargo of rhubarb—and magnesia—and castor oil—and family pills. A few quarts of senna-tea might not come in amiss. My patience! I believe you take us to be delicate infants."

"And I should recommend you to carry a small keg of whisky amid the boat stores," continued Duffham, not in the least put out. "You'll want it. Take a nip of it neat when you first get up from the ground in the morning. It is necessary you should, and will ward off some evils that might otherwise arise. Johnny Ludlow, I'll put the quinine into your charge: mind you don't forget it."

"Of all old women!" muttered Tod to me. "Had the Pater been in the room, this might have set him against our going."

On the following day we went over to Whitney Hall, intending to take Evesham on our way back, and buy what was wanted. Surprise the first. Bill Whitney was not at home, and was not to be of the boating party.

"You never saw anybody in such a way in your life," cried Helen, who could devote some time to us, now Temple was gone. "I must say it was too bad of papa. He never made any objection while Mr. Temple was here, but let poor William anticipate all the pleasure; and then he went and turned round afterwards."

"Did he get afraid for him?" cried Tod in wonder, "I'd not have thought it of Sir John."

"Afraid! no," returned Helen, opening her eyes. "What he got was a fit of the gout. A relapse."

"What has the gout to do with Bill?"

"Why, old Featherston ordered papa to Buxton, and papa said he could not do without William to see to him there: mamma was laid up in bed with one of her bad colds and she is not out of it yet. So papa went off, taking William—and you should just see how savage he was."

For William Whitney to be "savage" was something new. He had about the easiest temper in the world. I laughed, and said so.

"Savage for him, I mean," corrected Helen, who was given to random speech. "Nothing puts him out. Some cross fellows would not have consented, and have told their fathers so to their faces. It is a shame."

"I don't suppose Bill cares much; he is no hand at rowing," remarked Tod. "Did he write to Temple and decline?"

"Of course he did," was Helen's resentfully spoken answer; and she seemed, to say the least, quite as much put out as Bill could have been. "What else could he do?"

"Well, I am sorry for this," said Tod. "Temple has asked me now. Johnny also."

"Has he!" exclaimed Helen, her eyes sparkling. "I hope you will go."

"Of course we shall go," said Tod. "Where's Anna?"

"Anna? Oh, sitting up with mamma. She likes a sick-room: I don't."

"You'd like a boat better—if Temple were in it," remarked Tod, with a saucy laugh.

"Just you be quiet," retorted Helen.

From Whitney Hall we went to Evesham, and hastily procured what we wanted. The next day but one was that fixed for our departure, and when it at last dawned, bright and hot, we started amidst the good wishes of all the house, Tod with a fishing-rod and line, in case the expedition should afford an opportunity for fishing, and I with Duffham's quinine powders in my pocket.

Templemore, the seat of the Temples, was on the Welsh borders. We were not going there, but to a place called Sanbury, which lay within a few miles of the mansion. Slingsby Temple and his brother Rupert were already there, with the boat and the tent and all the rest of the apparatus, making ready for our departure on the morrow. Our head-quarters, until the start, was at the Ship, a good, old-fashioned inn, and we found that we were expected to be Temple's guests there.

"I would have asked you to Templemore to dine and sleep," he observed, in a cordial tone, "and my mother said she should have been pleased to see you; but to get down here in the morning would have been inconvenient. At least, it would take up the time that ought to be devoted to getting away. Will you come and see the boat?"

It was lying in a locked-up shed near the river. A tub-pair, large of its kind. Three of them were enough for it: and I saw that, in point of fact, I was not wanted for the working; but Temple either did not like to ask Tod without me, or else would not leave

me out. The Temples might have more than their share of pride, but it was accompanied by an equal share of refined and considerate feeling.

"We shall make you useful, never fear," said he to me, with a smile. "And it will be capital boating experience for you."

"I am sure I shall like it," I answered. And I liked him better than I ever had in my life.

Numerous articles were lying ready with the boat. Temple seemed to have thought of every needful thing. A pot to boil water in, a pan for frying, a saucepan for potatoes, a mop and towing-rope, stone jugs for beer, milk, and fresh water, tins to hold our grog, and the like. Amid the stores were tea, sugar, candles, cheese, butter, a cooked ham, some tinned provisions, a big jar of beer, and (Duffham should have seen it) a two-gallon keg of whisky.

"A doctor up with us said we ought to have whisky," remarked Tod. "He is nothing but an old woman. He put some quinine powders in Johnny's pocket, and talked of a waterproof sheet to lie upon."

"Quite right," said Temple. "There it lies."

And there it did lie, wrapped round the folded tent. A large waterproof tarpaulin to cover the ground, at night, and keep the damp from our limbs.

"Did you ever make a boating tour before, Temple?" asked Tod.

"Oh yes. I like it. I don't know any pleasure equal to that of encamping out at night on a huge plain, where you may study all the stars in the heavens."

As Temple spoke, he glanced towards a small

parcel in a corner. I guessed it was one of his night telescopes.

"Yes, it is," he assented; "but only a small one. The boat won't stretch, and we can only load it according to its limits."

Rupert Temple came up as we were leaving the shed. I had never seen him before. He was the only brother left, and Slingsby's presumptive heir. Why, I know not, but I had pictured Rupert as being like poor Fred—tall, fair, bright-looking as a man can be. But there existed not a grain of resemblance. Rupert was just a second edition of Slingsby: little, dark, plain, and proud. It was not an offensive pride—quite the contrary: and with those they knew well they were cordial and free.

Those originally invited by Temple were his cousin Arthur Slingsby, Lord Cracroft's son; Whitney; and a young Welshman named Pryce-Hughes. All had accepted, and intended to keep the engagement, knowing then of nothing to prevent them. But, curious to say, each one in succession wrote to decline it later. Whitney had to go elsewhere with his father; Pryce-Hughes hurt his arm, which disabled him from rowing; and Arthur Slingsby went off without ceremony in somebody's yacht to Malta. As the last of the letters came, which was Whitney's, Mrs. Temple seemed struck with the coincidence of all refusing, or compelled to refuse. "Slingsby, my dear," she said to her son, "it looks just as though you were not to go." "But I will go," answered Temple, who did not like to be baulked in a project, more than anybody else likes it; "if these can't come, I'll get others who can." And he forthwith told his brother Rupert that there'd

be room for him in the boat—he had refused him before; and wrote to Tod. After that, came another letter from Pryce-Hughes, saying his arm was better, and he could join the party at Bridgenorth or Bewdley. But it was too late: the boat was filled. Temple meant to do the Severn, the Wye, and the Avon, with a forced interlude of canals, and to be out a month, taking it easily, and resting on Sundays.

"Catch Slingsby missing Sunday service if he can help it!" said Rupert, aside to me.

We started in our flannel suits and red caps, and started well, but not until the afternoon, Temple steering, his brother and Tod taking the sculls. The water was very shallow; and by-and-by we ran aground. The stern of the boat swung round, and away went our tarpaulin; and it was carried off by the current before we could save it.

Well, that first afternoon there were difficulties to contend with, and one or other of the three was often in the water; but we made altogether some five or six miles. It was the hottest day I ever felt; and about seven o'clock, on coming to a convenient meadow nearly level with the river, none of us were sorry to step ashore. Making fast the boat for the night, we landed the tent and other things, and looked about us. A coppice bounded the field on the left; right across, in a second field, stood a substantial farmhouse, surrounded by its barns and ricks. Temple produced one of his cards, which was to be taken to the house, and the farmer's leave asked to encamp on the meadow. Rupert Temple and Tod made themselves decent to go on the errand.

"We shall want a bundle or two of straw," said

Temple; "it won't do to lie on the bare ground. And some milk. You must ask if they will accommodate us, and pay what they charge."

They went off, carrying also the jar to beg for fresh water. Temple and I began to unfurl the tent, and to busy ourselves amid the things generally.

"Halloa! what's to do here?"

We turned, and saw a stout, comely man, in white shirt-sleeves, an open waistcoat, knee-breeches, and top-boots; no doubt the farmer himself. Temple explained. He and some friends were on a boating tour, and had landed there to encamp for the night.

"But who gave you leave to do it?" asked the farmer. "You are trespassing. This is my ground."

"I supposed it might be necessary to ask leave," said Temple, haughtily courteous; "and I have sent to yonder house—which I presume is yours—to solicit it. If you will kindly accord the permission, I shall feel obliged."

That Temple looked disreputable enough, there could be no denying. No shoes on, no stockings, trousers tucked up above the knee: for he had been several times in the water, and, as yet, had done nothing to himself. But two of our college-caps chanced to be lying exposed on the boat: and perhaps Temple's tone and address had made their due impression. The farmer looked hard at him, as if trying to remember his face.

"It's not one of the young Mr. Temples, is it?" said he. "Of Templemore."

"I am Mr. Temple, of Templemore. I have sent my card to your house."

"Dash me!" cried the farmer heartily. "Shake

hands, sir. I fancied I knew the face. I've seen you out shooting, sir—and at Sanbury. I knew your father. I'm sure you are more than welcome to camp alongside here, and to any other accommodation I can give you. Will you shake hands, young gentleman?" giving his hand to me as he released Temple's.

"My brother and another of our party are gone to your house to beg some fresh water and buy some milk," said Temple, who did not seem at all to resent the farmer's familiarity, but rather to like it. "And we shall be glad of a truss or two of fresh straw, if you can either sell it to us or give it. We have had the misfortune to lose our waterproof-sheet."

"Sell be hanged!" cried the farmer, with a jovial laugh. "Sell ye a truss or two o' straw! Sell ye milk! Not if I know it, Mr. Temple. Ye be welcome, sir, to as much as ye want of both. One of my men shall bring the straw down."

"You are very good."

"And anything else ye please to think of. Don't scruple to ask, sir. Will you all come and sup at my house? We've got a rare round o' beef in cut, and I saw the missis making pigeon-pies this morning."

But Temple declined the invitation most decisively; and the farmer, perhaps noting that, did not press it. It was rare weather for the water, he observed.

"We could do with less heat," replied Temple.

"Ay," said the farmer, "I never felt it worse. But it's good for the corn."

And, with that, he left us. The other two came back with water and oceans of milk. Sticks were soon gathered from the coppice, and the fire made; the

round pot, filled with water, was put on to boil for tea, and the tent was set up.

Often and often in my later life have I looked back to that evening. The meal over—and a jolly good one we made—we sat round the camp fire, then smouldering down to red embers, and watched the setting sun, Rupert Temple and Tod smoking. It was a glorious sunset, the west lighted up with gold and purple and crimson; the sky above us clear and dark-blue.

But oh, how hot it was! The moon came up as the sun went down, and the one, to our fancy, seemed to give out as much heat as the other. There we sat on, sipping our grog, and talking in the bright moonlight, Temple with his elbows on the grass, his face turned up towards the sky and the few stars that came out. The colours in the west gave place to a beautiful opal, stretching northwards.

It was singular—I shall always think so—that the conversation should turn on MacRae, the Scotchman who used to make our skin creep at Oxford with his tales of second-sight. We were *not* talking of Oxford, and I don't know how MacRae came up. Temple had been talking of astronomy; from that we got to astrology; so perhaps it was in that way. Up he came, however, he and his weird believings; and Rupert Temple, who had not enjoyed the honour of Mac's acquaintance, and had probably never heard his name before, got me to relate one or two of Mac's choice experiences.

"Was the man a fool?" asked Rupert.

"Not a bit of it."

"I'm sure I should say so. Making out that he

could foresee people's funerals before they were dead, or likely to die."

"Poor Fred was three-parts of a believer in them," put in Temple, in a dreamy voice, as though his thoughts were buried in that past time.

"Fred was!" exclaimed Rupert, taking his brother sharply up. "Believer in what?"

"MacRae's superstitions."

"Nonsense, Slingsby!"

Temple made no rejoinder. In his eye, which chanced to catch mine at the moment, there sat a singular expression. I wondered whether he was recalling that other superstition of Fred's, that little episode a night or two before he died.

"We had better be turning in," said Temple, getting up. "It won't do to sit here too long; and we must be up betimes in the morning."

So we got to bed at last—if you can call it bed. The farmer's good straw was strewed thickly underneath us in the tent; we had our rugs; and the tent was fastened back at the entrance to admit air. But there was no air to admit, not a whiff of it; nothing came in but the moonlight. None of us remembered a lighter night, or a hotter one. I and Tod lay in the middle, the Temples on either side, Slingsby nearest the opening.

"I wonder who's got our sheet?" began Tod, breaking a silence that ensued when we had wished each other good-night.

Nobody answered.

"I say," struck in Rupert, by-and-by, "I've heard one ought not to go to sleep in the moonlight: it turns people luny. Do any of your faces catch it, outside there?"

"Go to sleep and don't talk," said Temple.

It might have been through the novelty of the situation, but the night was well on before any of us got to sleep. Tod and Rupert Temple went off first, and next (I thought) Temple did. *I* did not.

I dare say you've never slept four in a bed—and, that, one of littered straw. It's all very well to lie awake when you've a good wide mattress to yourself, and can toss and turn at will; but in the close quarters of a tent you can't do it for fear of disturbing the others. However, the longest watch has its ending; and I was just dropping off, when Temple, next to whom I lay, started hurriedly, and it aroused me.

"What's that?" he cried, in a half whisper.

I lifted my head, startled. He was sitting up, his eyes fixed on the opening we had left in the tent.

"Who's there?—who is it?" he said again; and his low voice had a slow, queer sound, as though he spoke in fear.

"What is it, Temple?" I asked.

"There, standing just outside the tent, right in the moonlight," whispered he. "Don't you see?"

I could see nothing. The stir awoke Rupert. He called out to know what ailed us; and that aroused Tod.

"Some man looking in at us," explained Temple in the same queer tone, half of abstraction, half of fear, his gaze still strained on the aperture. "He is gone now."

Up jumped Tod, and dashed outside the tent. Rupert struck a match and lighted the lantern. Nobody was to be seen but ourselves; and the only odd thing to be remarked was the white hue Temple's face

had taken. Tod was marching round the tent, looking about him far and near, and calling out to all intruders to show themselves. But all that met his eye was the level plain we were encamped upon, lying pale and white under the moonlight, and all the sound he heard was the croaking of the frogs.

"What could have made you fancy it?" he asked of Temple.

"Don't think it was fancy," responded Temple. "Never saw any man plainer in my life."

"You were dreaming, Slingsby," said Rupert. "Let us get to sleep again."

Which we did. At least, I can answer for myself.

The first beams of the glorious sun awoke us, and we rose to the beginning of another day, and to the cold, shivery feeling that, in spite of the heat of the past night and of the coming day, attends the situation. I could understand now why the nip of whisky, as Duffham called it, was necessary. Tod served it out. Lighting the fire of sticks to boil our tea-kettle —or the round pot that served for a kettle—we began to get things in order to embark again, when breakfast should be over.

"I say, Slingsby," cried Rupert to his brother, who seemed very silent, "what on earth took you, that you should disturb us in the night for nothing?"

"It was not for nothing. Someone was there."

"It must have been a stray sheep."

"Nonsense, Rupert! Could one mistake a sheep for a man?"

"Some benighted ploughman then, 'plodding his weary way.'"

"If you could bring forward any ploughman to testify that it was he beyond possibility of doubt, I'd give him a ten-pound note."

"Look here," said Tod, after staring a minute at this odd remark of Temple's, "you may put all idea of ploughmen and everybody else away. No one was there. If there had been, I must have seen him: it was not possible he could betake himself out of sight in a moment."

"Have it as you like," said Temple; "I am going to take a bath. My head aches."

Stripping, he plunged into the river, which was very wide just there, and swam towards the middle of it.

"It seems to have put Slingsby out," observed Rupert, alluding to the night alarm. "Do you notice how thoughtful he is? Just look at that fire!"

The sticks had turned black, and they began to smoke and hiss, giving out never a bit of blaze. Down knelt Ruper on one side and I on the other.

"Damp old obstinate things!" he ejaculated. And we set on to blow at them with all our might.

"Where's Temple?" I exclaimed presently, looking off, and not seeing him. Rupert glanced over the river.

"He must be diving, Johnny. Slingsby's fond of diving. Keep on blowing, lad, or we shall get no tea to-day."

So we kept on. But, I don't know why, a sort of doubtful feeling came over me, and while I blew I watched the water for Temple to come up. All in a moment he rose to the surface, gave one low, painful cry of distress, and disappeared again.

"Oh, my good heavens!" cried Rupert, leaping up and overturning the kettle.

But Tod was the quickest, and jumped in to the rescue. A first-rate swimmer and diver was he, almost as much at home in the water as out of it. In no time, as it seemed, he was striking back, bearing Temple. It was fortunate for such a crisis that Temple was so small and slight—of no weight to speak of.

By dint of gently rubbing and rolling, we got some life into him and some whisky down his throat. But he remained in the queerest, faintest state possible; no exertion in him, no movement hardly, no strength; alive, and that was about all; and just able to tell us that he had turned faint in the water.

"What is to be done?" cried Rupert. "We must get a doctor to him: and ought not to lie on the grass here. I wonder if that farmer would let him be taken to his house for an hour or two?"

I got into my boots, and ran off to ask; and met the farmer in the second field. He was coming towards us, curious perhaps to see whether we had started. Telling him what had happened, he showed himself all alive with sympathy, called some of his men to carry Temple to the farm, and sent back to prepare his wife. Their name we found was Best: and most hospitable, good-hearted people they turned out to be.

Well, Temple was taken there and a doctor was called in. The doctor shook his head, looked grave, and asked to have another doctor. Then, for the first time, doubts stole over us that it might be more serious than we had thought for. A dreadful feeling of fear took possession of me, and, in spite of all I could do, that scene at Oxford, when poor Fred Temple had

been carried into old Mrs. Golding's to die, would not go out of my mind.

We got into our reserve clothes, as if conscious that the boating flannels were done with for the present, left one of the farmer's men to watch our boat and things, and stayed with Temple. He continued very faint, and lay nearly quite still. The doctors tried some remedies, but they did no good. He did not revive. One of them called it "syncope of the heart;" but the other said hastily, "No, no, that was not the right name." It struck me that perhaps they did not know what the right name was. At last they said Mrs. Temple had better be sent for.

"I was just thinking so," cried Rupert. "My mother ought to be here. Who will go for her?"

"Johnny can," said Tod. "He is of no good here."

For that matter, none of us were any good, for we could do nothing for Temple.

I did not relish the task: I did not care to tell a mother that her son, whom she believes is well and hearty, is lying in danger. But I had to go: Rupert seemed to take it as a matter of course.

"Don't alarm her more than you can help, Ludlow," he said. "Say that Slingsby turned faint in the water this morning, and the medical men seem anxious. But ask her not to lose time."

Mr. Best started me on his own horse—a fine hunter, iron-grey. The weather was broiling. Templemore lay right across country, about six miles off by road. It was a beautiful place; I could see that much, though I had but little time to look at it; and it stood upon an eminence, the last mile of the road winding gradually up to its gates.

As ill-luck had it, or perhaps good-luck—I don't know which—Mrs. Temple was at one of the windows, and saw me ride hastily in. Having a good memory for faces, she recollected mine. Knowing that I had started with her sons in the boat, she was seized with a prevision that something was amiss, and came out before I was well off the horse.

"It is Mr. Ludlow, I think," she said, her plain dark face (so much like Slingsby's) very pale. "What ill news have you brought?"

I told her in the best manner I was able, just in the words Rupert had suggested, speaking quietly, and not showing any alarm in my own manner.

"Is there danger?" she at once asked.

"I am not *sure* that there is," I said, hardly knowing how to frame my answer. "The doctors thought you had better come, in case—in case of any danger arising; and Rupert sent me to ask you to do so."

She rang the bell, and ordered her carriage to be round instantly. "The bay horses," she added: "they are the fleetest. What will you take, Mr. Ludlow?"

I would not take anything. But a venerable old gentleman in black, with a powdered bald head—the butler, I concluded—suggested some lemonade, after my hot ride: and that I was glad of.

I rode on first, piloting the way for the carriage, which contained Mrs. Temple. She came alone: her daughter was away on a visit—as I had learnt from Rupert.

Slingsby lay in the same state, neither better nor worse: perhaps the breathing was somewhat more difficult. He smiled when he saw his mother, and put out his hand.

The day dragged itself slowly on. We did not know what to do with ourselves; that was a fact. Temple was to be kept quiet, and we might not intrude into his room—one on the ground-floor that faced the east: not even Rupert. Mr. and Mrs. Best entertained us well as far as meals went, but one can't be eating for ever. Now down in the meadow by the boat—which seemed to have assumed a most forlorn aspect —and now hovering about the farm, waiting for the last report of Temple. In that way the day crept through.

"Is it here that Mr. Temple is lying?"

I was standing under the jessamine-covered porch, sheltering my head from the rays of the setting sun, when a stranger came up and put the question. An extraordinay tall and thin man, with grey hair, clerical coat, and white neckcloth.

It was the Reverend Mr. Webster, perpetual curate of the parish around Templemore. And I seemed to know him before I heard his name, for he was the very image of his son, Long Webster, who used to be at Oxford.

"I am so grieved not to have been able to get here before," he said; "but I had just gone out for some hours when Mrs. Temple's message was brought to the parsonage. Is he any better?"

"I am afraid not," I answered. "We don't know what to make of it; it all seems so sudden and strange."

"But what is it?" he asked in a whisper.

"I don't know, sir. The doctors have said something about the heart."

"I should like to see the doctors before I go in to Mrs. Temple. Are they here?"

"One of them is, I think. They have been going in and out all day."

I fetched the doctor out to him; and they talked together in a low tone in the shaded and quiet porch. Not a ray of hope sat on the medical man's face: he as good as intimated that Temple was dying.

"Dear me!" cried the dismayed Mr. Webster.

"He seems to know it himself," continued the doctor. "At least, we fancy so, I and my brother practitioner. Though we have been most cautious not to alarm him by any hint of the kind."

"I should like to see him," said the parson. "I suppose I can?"

He went in, and was shut up for some time alone with Temple. Yes, he said, when he came out again, Temple knew all about it, and was perfectly resigned and prepared.

You may be sure there was no bed for any of us that night. Temple's breathing grew worse; and at last we went in by turns, one of us at a time, to prop up the pillows behind, and keep them propped: it seemed to make it firmer and easier for him as he lay against them. Towards morning I was called in to replace Rupert. The shaded candle seemed to be burning dim.

"You can lie down, my dear," Mrs. Temple whispered to Rupert. "Should there be any change, I will call you."

He nodded, and left the room. Not to lie down. Only to sit over the kitchen fire with Tod, and so pass away the long hours of discomfort.

"Who is this now?" panted Slingsby, as I took my place.

"It is I. Johnny Ludlow. Do you feel any better?"

He made a little sound of dissent in answer.

"Nay, I think you look easier, my dear," said Mrs. Temple, gently.

"No, no," he said, just opening his eyes. "Do not grieve, mother. I shall be better off. I shall be with my father and Fred."

"Oh, my son, my son, don't lose heart!" she said with a sob. "That will never do."

"I saw my father last night," said Temple.

The words seemed to strike her with a sort of shock. "No!" she exclaimed, perhaps thinking of the Temple superstition, and drawing back a step. "Pray, pray don't fancy that!"

"The tent was open to give us air," he said, speaking with difficulty. "I suddenly saw some one standing in the moonlight. I was next the opening; and I had not been able to get to sleep. For a moment I thought it was some man, some intruder passing by; but he took a strange likeness to my father, and I thought he beckoned——"

"We are not alone, Slingsby," interrupted Mrs. Temple, remembering me, her voice cold, not to say haughty.

"Ludlow knows. He knew the last time. Fred said he saw him, and I—I ridiculed it. Ludlow heard me. My father came for Fred, mother; he must have come for me."

"Oh, I can't—I can't believe this, Slingsby," she cried, in some excitement. "It was fancy—nervousness; nothing else. My darling, I cannot lose you! You have ever been dearer to me than my other children."

"Only for a little while, mother. It is God's will. That is our true home, you know; and then there will be no more parting. I am quite happy. I seem to be half there now. What is that light?"

Mrs. Temple looked round, and saw a faint streak coming in over the tops of the shutters. "It must be the glimmering of dawn in the east," she said. "The day is breaking."

"Ay," he answered: "my day. Where's Rupert? I should like to say good-bye to him. Yes, mother, that's the dawn of heaven."

And just as the sun rose, he went there.

That was the end of our boating tour. Ridicule has been cast on some of the facts, and will be again. It is a painful subject; and I don't know that I should have related it, but for its having led to another (and more lively) adventure, which I proceed to tell of.

ROSE LODGE.

It looked the prettiest place imaginable, lying under the sunlight, as we stood that first morning in front of the bay. The water was smooth and displayed lovely colours: now green, now blue, as the clouds passed over the face of the sky, now taking tinges of brown and amber; and towards evening it would be pink and purple. Further on, the waters were rippling and shining in the sun. Fishing vessels stood out at sea, plying their craft; little cockle-shells, their white sails set, disported on it; rowing boats glided hither and thither. In the distance, the grand waves of the sea were ebbing and flowing; a noble merchantman, all her canvas filled, was passing proudly on her outward-bound course.

"I should like to live here," cried Tod, turning away at last.

And I'm sure I felt that I should. For I could watch the ever-changing sea from morning to night, and not tire of it.

"Suppose we remain here, Johnny?"

"To live?"

"Nonsense, lad! For a month. I am going for a sail. Will you come?"

After the terrible break-up of our boating tour, poor Slingsby Temple was taken home to Templemore, ourselves going back to Sanbury to wait for the funeral, and for our black garments, for which we had sent. Rupert was fearfully cut up. Although he was the heir now, and would be chief of Templemore, I never saw any brother take a death more to heart. "Slingsby liked you much, Ludlow," said Rupert to me, when he came to us at the inn at Sanbury the day before the funeral, and the hot tears were running down his face as he spoke. "He always liked you at Oxford: I have heard him say so. Like himself, you kept yourself free from the lawlessness of the place——"

"As if a young one like Johnny would go in for anything of the kind!" interrupted Tod.

"Young?" repeated Rupert Temple. "Well, I don't know. When I was there myself, some young ones—lads—went in for a pretty good deal. He liked you much, Ludlow."

And somehow I liked to hear Rupert say it.

Quitting Sanbury after the funeral, we came to this little place, Cray Bay, which was on the sea coast, a few miles beyond Templemore. Our pleasure cut short at the beginning of the holiday, we hardly knew what to do with the rest of it, and felt like two fish suddenly thrown out of water. Mrs. Temple, taking her son and daughter, went for change to her brother's, Lord Cracroft.

At Cray Bay we found one small inn, which bore the odd sign of the Whistling Wind, and was kept by Mrs. Jones, a stout Welshwoman. The bedroom she gave us enjoyed a look-out at some stables, and would not hold much more than the two small beds in it. In

answer to Tod's remonstrances, she said that she had a better room, but it was just now occupied.

The discomforts of the lodging were forgotten when we strolled out to look about us, and saw the beauties of the sea and bay. Cray Bay was a very primitive spot: little else but a bettermost fishing-place. It had not then been found out by the tour-taking world. Its houses were built anyhow and anywhere; its shops could be counted on your fingers: a butcher's, a baker's, a grocer's, and so on. Fishermen called at the doors with fish, and countrywomen with butter and fowls. There was no gas, and the place at night was lighted with oil-lamps. A trout-stream lay at the back of the village, half a mile away.

Stepping into a boat, on this first morning, for the sail proposed by Tod, we found its owner a talkative old fellow. His name was Druff, he said; he had lived at Cray Bay most of his life, and knew every inch of its land and every wave of its sea. There couldn't be a nicer spot to stop at for the summer, as he took it; no, not if you searched the island through: and he supposed it was first called Cray Bay after the cray-fish, they being caught in plenty there.

"More things than one are called oddly in this place," remarked Tod. "Look at that inn: the Whistling Wind; what's that called after?"

"And so the wind do hoostle on this here coast; 'deed an' it do," returned Druff. "You'd not forget it if you heered it in winter."

The more we saw of Cray Bay that day, the more we liked it. Its retirement just suited our mood, after the experience of but four or five days back: for I can tell you that such a shock is not to be forgotten all in

a moment. And when we went up to bed that night, Tod had made up his mind to stay for a time if lodgings could be found.

"Not in this garret, that you can't swing a cat in," said he, stretching out his hands towards the four walls. "Madame Jones won't have me here another night if I can help it."

"No. Our tent in the meadow was ten times livelier."

"Are there any lodgings to be had in this place?" asked Tod of the slip-shod maid-servant, when we were at breakfast the next morning. But she professed not to know of any.

"But, Tod, what would they say at home to our staying here?" I asked after awhile, certain doubts making themselves heard in my conscience.

"What they chose," said Tod, cracking his fourth egg.

"I am afraid the Pater——"

"Now, Johnny, you need not put in your word," he interrupted, in the off-hand tone that always silenced me. "It's not your affair. We came out for a month, and I am not going back home, like a bad sixpence returned, before the month has expired. Perhaps I shall tack a few weeks on to it. I am not dependent on the Pater's purse."

No; for he had his five hundred pounds lying untouched at the Worcester Old Bank, and his cheque-book in his pocket.

Breakfast over, we went out to look for lodgings; but soon feared it might be a hopeless search. Two little cottages had a handboard stuck on a stick in the garden, with "Lodgings" on it. But the rooms in

each proved to be a tiny sitting-room and a more tiny bedroom, smaller than the garret at the Whistling Wind.

"I never saw such a world as this," cried Tod, as we paced disconsolately before the straggling dwellings in front of the bay. "If you want a thing you can't get it."

"We might find rooms in those houses yonder," I said, nodding towards some, scattered about in the distance. "They must be farms."

"Who wants to live a mile off?" he retorted. "It's the place itself I like, and the bay, and the—— Oh, by George! Look there, Johnny!"

We had come to the last house in the place—a fresh-looking, charming cottage, with a low roof and a green verandah, that we had stopped to admire yesterday. It faced the bay, and stood by itself in a garden that was a perfect bower of roses. The green gate bore the name "Rose Lodge," and in the parlour window appeared a notice "To Let;" which notice, we both felt sure, had not been there the previous day.

"Fancy their having rooms to let here!" cried Tod. "The nicest little house in all the place. How lucky!"

In he went impulsively, striding up the short gravel path, which was divided from the flower-beds by two rows of sea-shells, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a tall grenadier of a female, rising six feet, with a spare figure and sour face. She had a large cooking-apron on, dusted with flour.

"You have lodgings to let," said Tod; "can I see them?"

"Lodgings to let?" she repeated, scanning us up and down attentively; and her voice sounded harsh and rasping. "I don't know that we have. You had better see Captain Copperas."

She threw open the door of the parlour: a small, square, bright-looking room, rather full of furniture; a gay carpet, a cottage piano, and some green chairs being among the articles.

Captain Copperas came forward: a retired seaman, as we heard later; tall as the grenadier, and with a brown, weather-beaten face. But in voice and manners he, at any rate, did not resemble her, for they were just as pleasant as they could be.

"I have no lodgings," said he; "my servant was mistaken. My house is to let; and the furniture to be taken to."

Which announcement was of course a vast check upon Tod. He sat looking very blank, and then explained that we only required lodgings. We had been quite charmed with Cray Bay, and would like to stay in it for a month or so: and that it was *his* misapprehension, not the servant's.

"It's a pity but you wanted a little house," said Captain Copperas. "This is the most compact, desirable, perfect little dwelling mortal man ever was in. Rent twenty-six pounds a year only, furniture to be bought out-and-out for a hundred and twenty-five. It would be a little Eden—a paradise—to those who had the means to take it."

As he spoke, he regarded us individually and rather pointedly. It looked as much as to doubt whether we had the means. Tod (conscious of his five hundred pounds in the bank) threw his head up.

"Oh, I have the means," said he, as haughtily as poor Slingsby Temple had ever spoken. "Johnny, did you put any cards in your pocket? Give Captain Copperas one."

I laid one of Tod's cards on the table. The Captain took it up.

"It's a great grief to me to leave the house," he remarked. "Especially after having been only a few months in it! — and laying in a stock of the best furniture in a plain way, purchased in the best market! Downright grief."

"Then why do you leave it?" naturally asked Tod.

"Because I have to go afloat again," said the sailor, his face taking a rueful expression. "I thought I had given up the sea for good; but my old employers won't let me give it up. They know my value as a master, and have offered me large terms for another year or two of service. A splendid new East Indiaman, two thousand tons register, and—and, in short, I don't like to be ungrateful, so I have said I'll go."

"Could you not keep on the house until you come back?"

"My sister won't let me keep it on. Truth to say, she never cared for the sea, and wants to get away from it. That exquisite scene"—extending his hand towards the bay, and to a steamer working her way onwards near the horizon—"has no charms for Miss Copperas; and she intends to betake herself off to our relatives in Leeds. No: I can only give the place up, and dispose of the furniture to whomsoever feels inclined to take it. It will be a fine sacrifice. I shall

not get the one half of the money I gave for it; don't look to. And all of it as good as new!"

I could read Tod's face as a book, and the eager look in his eyes. He was thinking how much he should like to seize upon the tempting bargain; to make the pretty room we sat in, and the prettier prospect yonder, his own. Captain Copperas appeared to read him also.

"You are doubting whether to close with the offer or not," he said, with a frank smile. "You might make it yours for a hundred and twenty-five pounds. Perhaps—pardon me; you are both but young—you may not have the sum readily at command?"

"Oh yes, I have," said Tod, candidly. "I have it lying at my banker's, in Worcester. No, it's not for that reason I hesitate. It is—it is—fancy me with a house on my hands!" he broke off, turning to me with a laugh.

"It is an offer that you will never be likely to meet with again, sir."

"But what on earth could I do with the house and the things afterwards—allowing that we stayed here for a month or two?" urged Tod.

"Why, dispose of them again, of course," was the ready answer of Captain Copperas. "You'd find plenty of people willing to purchase, and to take the house off your hands. Such an opportunity as this need not go begging. I only wish I had not to be off all in a jiffy; I should make a very different bargain."

"I'll think of it," said Tod, as we got up to leave. "I must say it is a nice little nest."

In the doorway we encountered a tall lady, with a

brown face and a scarlet top-knot. She wore a thick gold chain, and bracelets to match.

"My sister, Miss Copperas," said the captain. And he explained to her in a few words our business, and the purport of what had passed.

"For goodness' sake, don't lose the opportunity!" cried she, impressively affectionate, as though she had known us all our lives. "So advantageous an offer was never made to anyone before; and but for my brother's obstinately and wickedly deciding to go off to that wretched sea again, it would not be made now. Yes, Alexander," turning to him, "I do call it quite wicked. Only think, sir"—to Tod—"a house-ful of beautiful furniture, every individual thing that a family can want; a piano here, a table-cloth press in the kitchen; plate, linen, knives, forks; a garden full of roses and a roller for the paths: and all to go for the miserably inadequate sum of a hundred and twenty-five pounds! But that's my brother all over. He's a true sailor. Setting himself up in a home to-day, and selling it off for an old song to-morrow!"

"Well, well, Fanny," he said, when he could get a word in edgeways to stem the torrent of eloquence, "I have agreed to go, and I must go."

"Have you been over the house?" she resumed, in the same voluble manner. "No? Then do pray come and see it. Oh, don't talk of trouble. This is the dining-room," throwing open a door behind her.

It was a little side-room, looking up the coast and over the fields; just enough chairs and tables in it for use. Upstairs we found three chambers, with their beds and other things. It all looked very comfortable,

and I thought Captain Copperas was foolish to ask so small a sum.

"This is the linen-closet," said Miss Copperas, opening a narrow door at the top of the stairs, and displaying some shelves that seemed to be well filled. "Sheets, table-cloths, dinner-napkins, towels, pillow-cases; everything for use. Anybody, taking the house, has only to step in, hang up his hat, and find himself at home. Look at those plates and dishes!" she ran on, as we got down again and entered the kitchen. "They are very nice — and enough to dine ten people."

They were of light blue ware, and looked nice enough on the dresser shelves. The grenadier stood at the table, chopping parsley on a trencher, and did not condescend to take any notice of us.

Out in the garden next, amidst the roses—which grew all round the house, clustering everywhere. They were of that species called the cabbage-rose; large, and fragrant, and most beautiful. It made me think of the Roses by Bendemeer's stream.

"I should like the place of all things!" cried Tod, as we strolled towards the bay to get a sail; and found Druff seated in his boat, smoking. "I say, Druff, do you know Captain Copperas? — Get in, Johnny."

"Lives next door to me, at Rose Lodge," answered Druff.

"Next door! What, is that low whitewashed shanty your abode? How long has Copperas lived here?"

"A matter of some months," said Druff. "He came in the spring."

"Are they nice kind of people?"

"They be civil to me," answered Druff. "Sent my old missis a bottle o' wine in, and some hot broth t'other day, when she was ill. The Captain——"

A sudden lurch put a stop to the discourse, and in a few minutes we glided out of the bay, Tod sitting in a brown reverie, his gaze fixed on the land and on Rose Lodge.

"My mind's made up, Johnny. I shall take the place."

I dropped my knife and fork in very astonishment. Our sail over, we were at dinner in the bar-parlour of the Whistling Wind.

"Surely you won't do it, Tod!"

"Surely I shall, lad. I never saw such a nice little nest in all my life. And there's no risk; you heard what Copperas said; I shall get my money back again when we want to leave it."

"Look here, Tod: I was thinking a bit while we sat in the boat. Does it not seem to you to be too good to be genuine?"

It was Tod's turn now to drop his knife and fork; and he did it angrily. "Just tell me what you mean, Johnny Ludlow."

"All that furniture, and the piano, and the carpets, and the plate and linen: it looks such a heap to be going for only a hundred and twenty-five pounds."

"Well?"

"I can't think that Copperas means it."

"*Not mean it!* Why, you young muff! *There are the things*, and he has offered them to me. If Cop-

peras chooses to part with them for half their value, is it my place to tell him he's a fool? The poor man is driven into a corner through lack of time. Sailors are uncommonly improvident."

"It is such an undertaking, Tod."

"It is not your undertaking."

"Of course it is a tremendous bargain; and it is a beautiful little place to have. But I can't think what the Pater will say to it."

"I can," said Tod. "When he hears of it—but that will not be yet awhile—he will come off here post-haste to blow me up; and end by falling in love with the roses. He always says that there is no rose like a cabbage-rose."

"He will never forgive you, Tod; or me either. He will say the world's coming to an end."

"If you are afraid of him, young Johnny, you can betake yourself off. Hold up your plate for some more lamb, and hold your tongue."

There was no help for it; anything I could say would have no more weight with Tod than so much wasted water; so I did as he bade me, and held my tongue. Down he went to Captain Copperas ere his dinner was well swallowed, and told him he would take the house. The Captain said he would have a short agreement drawn up; and Tod took out his cheque-book, to give a cheque for the money there and then. But the Captain, like an honest man, refused to receive it until the agreement was executed; and, if all the same, he would prefer money down, to a cheque. Cheques were all very good, no doubt, he said; but sailors did not much understand them. Oh,

of course, Tod answered, shaking him by the hand; he would get the money.

Inquiring of our landlady for the nearest bank, Tod was directed to a town called St. Ann's, three miles off; and we started for it at once, pelting along the hot and dusty road. The bank found—a small one with a glazed bow-window, Tod presented a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds, twenty-five of it being for himself, and asked the clerk to cash it.

The clerk looked at the cheque, then looked at Tod, and then at me. "This is not one of our cheques," he said. "We have no account in this name."

"Can't you read?" asked Tod. "The cheque is upon the Worcester Old Bank. You know it well by reputation, I presume?"

The clerk whisked into a small kind of box, divided from the office by glass, where sat a bald-headed gentleman writing at a desk full of pigeon-holes. A short conference, and then the latter came to us, holding the cheque in his hand.

"We will send and present this at Worcester," he said; "and shall get an answer the day after to-morrow. No doubt we shall then be able to give you the money."

"Why can't you give it me now?" asked Tod, in rather a fiery tone.

"Well, sir, we should be happy to do it; but it is not our custom to cash cheques for strangers."

"Do you fear the cheque will not be honoured?" flashed Tod. "Why, I have five hundred pounds lying there! Do you suppose I want to cheat you?"

"Oh, certainly not," said the banker, with suavity. "Only, you see, we cannot break through our standing

rules. Call upon us the day after to-morrow, and doubtless the money will be ready."

Tod came away swearing. "The infamous upstarts!" cried he. "To refuse to cash my cheque! Johnny, it's my belief they take us for a couple of adventurers."

The money came in due course. After receiving it from the cautious banker, we went straight to Rose Lodge, pelting back from St. Ann's at a fine pace. Tod signed the agreement, and paid the cash in good Bank of England notes. Captain Copperas brought out a bottle of champagne, which tasted uncommonly good to our thirsty throats. He was to leave Cray Bay that night on his way to Liverpool to take possession of his ship; Miss Copperas would leave on the morrow, and then we should go in. And Elizabeth, the grenadier, was to remain with us as servant. Miss Copperas recommended her, hearing Tod say he did not know where to look for one. We bargained with her to keep up a good supply of pies, and to pay her twenty shillings a month.

"Will you allow me to leave one or two of my boxes for a few days?" asked Miss Copperas of Tod, when we went down on the following morning, and found her equipped for departure. "This has been so hurried a removal that I have not had time to pack all my things, and must leave it for Elizabeth to do."

"Leave anything you like, Miss Copperas," replied Tod, as he shook hands. "Do what you please. I'm sure the house seems more like yours than mine."

She thanked him, wished us both good-bye, and set off to walk to the coach-office, attended by the grenadier, and a boy wheeling her luggage. And we were in possession of our new home.

It was just delightful. The weather was charming, though precious hot, and the new feeling of being in a house of our own, with not as much as a mouse to control us and our movements, was satisfactory in the highest degree. We passed our days sailing about with old Druff, and came home to the feasts prepared by the grenadier, and to sit among the roses. Altogether we had never had a time like it. Tod took the best chamber, facing the sea; I had the smaller one over the dining-room, looking up coastwards.

"I shall go fishing to-morrow, Johnny," Tod said to me one evening. "We'll bring home some trout for supper."

He was stretched on three chairs before the open window; coat off, pipe in mouth. I turned round from the piano. It was not much of an instrument. Miss Copperas had said, when I hinted so to her on first trying it, that it wanted "age."

"Shall you? All right," I answered, sitting down by him. The stars were shining on the calm blue water; here and there lights, looking like stars also, twinkled from some vessels at anchor.

"If I thought they'd not quite die of the shock, Johnny, I'd send the Pater and Madam an invitation to come off here and pay us a visit. They would fall in love with the place at once."

"Oh, Tod, I wish you would!" I cried, eagerly seizing on the words. "They could have your room,

and you have mine, and I would go into the little one at the back."

"I dare say! I was only joking, lad."

The last words and their tone destroyed my hopes. It is inconvenient to possess a conscience. Advantageous though the bargain was that Tod had made, and delightfully though our days were passing, I could not feel easy until they knew of it at home.

"I wish you would let me write and tell them, Tod."

"No," said he; "I don't want the Pater to whirl himself off here and spoil our peace—for that's what would come of it."

"He thinks we are in some way with the Temples. His letter implied it."

"The best thing he can think."

"But I want to write to the mother, Tod. She must be wondering why I don't."

"Wondering won't give her the fever, lad. Understand me, Mr. Johnny: you are not to write."

Breakfast over in the morning, we crossed the meadows to the trout stream, with the fishing-tackle and a basket of frogs. Tod complained of the intense heat. The dark blue sky was cloudless; the sun beat down upon our heads.

"I'll tell you what, Johnny," he said, when we had borne the blaze for an hour on the banks, the fish refusing to bite; "we should be all the cooler for our umbrellas. You'll get a sunstroke, if you don't look out."

"It strikes me you won't get any fish to-day."

"Does it? You be off and get the parapluïes."

The low front window stood open when I reached

home. It was the readiest way of entering; and I passed on to the passage to the umbrella-stand. The grenadier came dashing out of her kitchen, looking frightened.

"Oh!" said she, "it's you!"

"I have come back for the umbrellas, Elizabeth; the sun's like a furnace. Why! what have you got there?"

The kitchen was strewed with clothes from one end of it to the other. On the floor stood the two boxes left by Miss Copperas.

"I am only putting up Miss Copperas's things," returned Elizabeth, in her surly way. "It's time they were sent off."

"What a heap she must have left behind!" I remarked, and left the grenadier to her work.

We got home in the evening, tired out. The grenadier had a choice supper ready; and, in answer to me, said the trunks of Miss Copperas were packed and gone. When bed-time came, Tod was asleep at the window, and wouldn't awake. The grenadier had gone to her room ages ago; I wanted to go to mine.

"Tod, then! Do please wake up: it is past ten."

A low growl answered me. And in that same moment I became aware of some mysterious stir outside the front gate. People seemed to be trying it. The grenadier always locked it at night.

"Tod! Tod! There are people at the gate—trying to get in."

The tone and the words aroused him. "Eh? What do you say, Johnny? People trying the gate?"

"Listen! They are whispering to one another. They are trying the fastenings."

"What on earth does anybody want at this time of night?" growled Tod. "And why can't they ring like decent people? What's your business?" he roared out from the window. "Who the dickens are you?"

"Hush, Todd! It—it can't be the Squire, can it? Come down here to look after us."

The suggestion silenced him for a moment.

"I—I don't think so, Johnny," he slowly said. "No, it's not the Squire: he would be letting off at us already from the top of his voice; he'd not wait to come in to do it. Let's go and see. Come along."

Two young men stood at the gate. One of them turned the handle impatiently as we went down the path.

"What do you want?" demanded Tod.

"I wish to see Captain Copperas."

"Then you can't see him," answered Tod, woefully cross after being startled out of his sleep. "Captain Copperas does not live here."

"Not live here!" repeated the man. "That's gammon. I know he does live here."

"I tell you he does not," haughtily repeated Tod. "Do you doubt my word?"

"Who does live here, then?" asked the man, in a different tone, evidently impressed.

"Mr. Todhetley."

"I can take my oath that Captain Copperas lived here ten days ago."

"What of that? He is gone, and Mr. Todhetley's come."

"Can I see Mr. Todhetley?"

"You see him now. I am he. Will you tell me your business?"

"Captain Copperas owes me a small account, and I want it settled."

The avowal put Tod in a rage; and he showed it. "A small account! Is this a proper time to come bothering gentlemen for your small accounts—when folks are gone to bed, or going?"

"Last time I came in the afternoon. Perhaps that was the wrong time? Any way, Captain Copperas put me off, saying I was to call some evening, and he'd pay it."

"And I'll thank you to betake yourself off again now. How dare you disturb people at this unearthly hour? As to Captain Copperas, I tell you that he is no longer here."

"Then I should say that Captain Copperas was a swindler."

Tod turned on his heel at the last words, and the men went away, their retreating footsteps echoing on the road. I thought I heard the grenadier's window being shut, so the noise must have disturbed her.

"Swindlers themselves!" cried Tod, as he fastened the house-door. "I'll lay you a guinea, Johnny, they were two loose fellows trying to sneak inside and see what they could pick up."

Nevertheless, in the morning he asked the grenadier whether it was true that such men had come there after any small account. And the grenadier resented the supposition indignantly. Captain Copperas owed no "small accounts" that she knew of, she said; and she had lived with him and Miss C—— ever since they came to Cray Bay. She only wished she had seen the men herself last night; she would have answered them. And when, upon this, I said I thought

I had heard her shut her window down, and supposed she had been listening, she denied it, and accused me of being fanciful.

"Impudent wretches!" ejaculated Tod; "to come here and asperse a man of honour like Copperas."

That day passed off quietly, and to our thorough enjoyment; but the next one was fated to bring us some events. Some words of Tod's, as I was pouring out the breakfast coffee, startled me.

"Oh, by Jupiter! How have they found us out here?"

Looking up, I saw the postman entering the gate with a letter. The same thought struck us both—that it was some terrible mandate from the Squire. Tod went to the window and held out his hand.

"For Elizabeth, at Captain Copperas's," read out the man, as he handed it to Tod. It was like a relief, and Tod sent me with it to the grenadier.

But in less than one minute afterwards she came into the room, bathed in tears. The letter was to tell her that her mother was lying ill at their home, some unpronounceable place in Wales, and begging earnestly to see her.

"I'm sorry to leave you at a pinch; but I must go," sobbed the grenadier. "I can't help myself; I shall start by the afternoon coach."

Well, of course there was nothing to be said against it. A mother was a mother. But Tod began to wonder what on earth we should do: as did I, for the matter of that. The grenadier offered to cook our luncheon before starting, which we looked upon as a concession.

"Let's go for a sail, Johnny, and leave perplexities to right themselves."

And a glorious sail we had! Upon getting back at one o'clock, we found a huge meat pie upon the luncheon-table, and the grenadier with her bonnet on. Tod handed her five shillings; the sum, as she computed, that was due to her.

We heard the bumping of her boxes on the stairs. At the gate stood the boy with the truck, ready to wheel them to the coach-office, as he had wheeled those of Miss Copperas. Tod was helping himself to some more pie, when the grenadier threw open the door.

"My boxes are here, gentlemen. Will you like to look at them?"

"Look at them for what?" asked Tod, after staring a minute.

"To see that I'm taking none of your property away inside them."

At last Tod understood what she meant, and felt inclined to throw the dish at her head. "Shut the door, and don't be a fool," said he. "And I hope you'll find your mother better," I called out after him.

"And now, Johnny, what are we to do?" cried he, when the lunch was over and there was nobody to take it away. "This is like a second experience of Robinson Crusoe."

We left it where it was, and went off to the shops and the Whistling Wind, asking if they could tell us of a servant. But servants seemed not to be forthcoming at a pinch; and we told our troubles to old Druff.

"My missis shall come in and see a bit to things for ye," said he. "She can light the fire in the morning, anyway, and boil the kettle."

And with the aid of Mother Druff—an ancient dame who went about in clogs—we got on till after breakfast in the morning, when a damsel came after the place. She wore a pink gauze bonnet, smart and tawdry, and had a pert manner.

"Can you cook?" asked Tod.

The substance of her answer was, that she could do everything under the sun, provided she were not "tanked" after. Her late missis was for ever a-tanking. Would there be any washing to do?—because washing didn't agree with her: and how often could she go out, and what was the wages?

Tod looked at me in doubt, and I slightly shook my head. It struck me that she would not do at any price. "I think you won't suit," said he to her.

"Oh," returned she, all impertinence. "I can go then where I shall suit: and so, good-morning, gentlemen. There's no call for you to be so uppish. I didn't come after your forks and spoons."

"The impudent young huzzy!" cried Tod, as she slammed the gate after her. "But she might do better than nobody, Johnny."

"I don't like her, Tod. If it rested with me, I'd rather live upon bread and cheese than take her."

"Bread and cheese!" he echoed. "It is not a question of only bread and cheese. We must get our beds made and the knives cleaned."

It seemed rather a blue look-out. Tod said he would go up again to the Whistling Wind, and tell Mother Jones she must find us some one. Picking a rose as he went down the path, he met a cleanly-looking elderly woman who was entering. She wore a dark

apron, and old-fashioned white cap, and said she had come after the place.

"What can you do?" began Tod. "Cook?"

"Cook and clean too, sir," she answered. And I liked the woman the moment I saw her.

"Oh, I don't know that there's much cleaning to do, beyond the knives," remarked Tod. "We want our dinners cooked, you know, and the beds made. That's about all."

The woman smiled at that, as if she thought he knew little about it. "I have been living at the grocer's, up yonder, sir, and they can give me a good character, though I say it. I'm not afraid of doing all you can want done, and of giving satisfaction, if you'd please to try me."

"You'll do," said Tod, after glancing at me. "Can you come in at once?"

"As soon as you like, sir. When would you please to go for my character?"

"Oh, bother that!" said he. "I've no doubt you are all right. Can you make pigeon-pies?"

"That I can, sir."

"You'll do, then. What is your name?"

"Elizabeth Ho——"

"Elizabeth!" he interrupted, not giving her time to finish. "Why, the one just gone was Elizabeth. A grenadier, six feet high."

"I've been mostly called Betty, sir."

"Then we'll call you Betty, too."

She went away, saying that she'd come back with her aprons. Tod looked after her.

"You like her, don't you, Johnny?"

"That I do. She's a good sort; honest as honest can be. You did not ask her about wages."

"Oh, time enough for that," said he.

And Betty turned out to be as good as gold. Her history was a curious one; she told it to me one evening in the kitchen; in her small way she had been somewhat of a martyr. But God had been with her always, she said; through more trouble than the world knew of.

We got a letter from Mrs. Todhetley, redirected on from Sanbury. The chief piece of news it contained was, that the Squire and old Jacobson had gone off to Great Yarmouth for a fortnight.

"That's good," said Tod. "Johnny lad, you may write home now."

"And tell about Rose Lodge?"

"Tell all you like. I don't mind Madam. She'll have leisure to digest it against the Pater returns."

I wrote a long letter, and told everything, going into the minute details that she liked to hear, about the servants, and all else. Rose Lodge was the most wonderful bargain, I said, and we were both as happy as the days were long.

The church was a little primitive edifice near the sands. We went to service on Sunday morning; and, upon getting home afterwards, found the cloth not laid. Tod had ordered dinner to be on the table. He sent me to the kitchen to blow up Betty.

"It is quite ready and waiting to be served; but I can't find a clean tablecloth," said Betty.

"Why, I told you where the tablecloths were," shouted out Tod, who heard the answer. "In that cupboard at the top of the stairs."

"But there are no tablecloths there, sir," cried she. "Nor anything else either, except a towel or two."

Tod went upstairs in a passion, bidding her follow him, and flung the cupboard-door open. He thought she had looked in the wrong place.

But Betty was right. With the exception of two or three old towels and some stacks of newspapers, the cupboard was empty.

"By Jove!" cried Tod. "Johnny, that grenadier must have walked off with all the linen!"

Whether she had, or had not, none to speak of could be found now. Tod talked of sending the police after her, and wrote an account of her delinquencies to Captain Copperas, addressing the letter to the Captain's brokers in Liverpool.

"But," I debated, not quite making matters out to my own satisfaction, "the grenadier wanted us to examine her boxes, you know."

"All for a blind, Johnny."

It was the morning following this day, Monday, that, upon looking from my window, something struck me as being the matter with the garden. What was it? Why, all the roses were gone! Down I rushed, half dressed, burst out at the back-door, and gazed about me.

It was a scene of desolation. The rose-trees had been stripped; every individual rose was clipped neatly off from every tree. Two or three trees were left untouched before the front window; all the rest were rifled.

"What the mischief is the matter, Johnny?" called out Tod, as I was hastily questioning Betty. "You are making enough noise, lad."

"We have had robbers here, Todd. Thieves. All the roses are stolen."

He made a worse noise than I did. Down he came, full rush, and stamped about the garden like anybody wild. Old Druff and his wife heard him, and came up to the palings. Betty, busy in her kitchen, had not noticed the disaster.

"I see Tasker's people here betimes this morning," observed Druff. "A lot of 'em came. 'Twas a pity, I thought, to slice off all them nice big blows."

"Saw who?—saw what?" roared Tod, turning his anger upon Druff. "You mean to confess to me that you saw these rose-trees rifled, and did not stop it?"

"Nay, master," said Druff, "how could I interfere with Tasker's people? Their business ain't mine."

"Who are Tasker's people?" foamed Tod. "Who is Tasker?"

"Tasker? Oh, Tasker's that there man at the white cottage on t'other side the village. Got a big garden round it."

"Is he a poacher? Is he a robber?"

"Bless ye, master, Tasker's no robber."

"And yet you saw him take my roses?"

"I see him for certain. I see him busy with the baskets as the men filled 'em."

Dragging me after him, Tod went striding off to Tasker's. We knew the man by sight; had once spoken to him about his garden. He was a kind of nursery-man. Tasker was standing near his greenhouse.

"Why did I come and steal your roses?" he quietly

repeated, when he could understand Tod's fierce demands. "I didn't *steal* 'em, sir; I picked 'em."

"And how dared you do it? Who gave you leave to do it?" foamed Tod, turning green and purple.

"I did it because they were mine."

"Yours! Are you mad?"

"Yes, sir, mine. I bought 'em and paid for 'em."

Tod did think him mad at the moment; I could see it in his face. "Of whom, pray, did you buy them?"

"Of Captain Copperas. I had 'em from the garden last year and the year afore: other folks lived in the place then. Three pounds I gave for 'em this time. The Captain sold 'em to me a month ago, and I was to take my own time for gathering them."

I don't think Tod had ever felt so *floored* in all his life. He stood back against the pales and stared. A month ago we had not known Captain Copperas.

"I might have took all the lot: 'twas in the agreement: but I left ye a few afore the front winder," said Tasker, in an injured tone. "And you come and attack me like this!"

"But what do you want with them? What are they taken for?"

"To make otter of roses," answered Tasker. "I sell 'em to the distillers."

"At any rate, though it be as you say, I would have taken them openly," contended Tod. "Not come like a thief in the night."

"But then I had to get 'em afore the sun was powerful," calmly answered Tasker.

Tod was silent all the way home. I had not spoken a word, good or bad. Betty brought in the coffee.

"Pour it out," said he to me. "But, Johnny," he presently added, as he stirred his cup slowly round, "I *can't* think how it was that Copperas forgot to tell me he had sold the roses."

"Do you suppose he did forget?"

"Why, *of course* he forgot. Would an honest man like Copperas conceal such a thing if he did not forget it? You will be insinuating next, Johnny Ludlow, that he is as bad as Tasker."

I must say we were rather in the dumps that day. Tod went off fishing; I carried the basket and things. I did wish I had not said so much about the roses to Mrs. Todhetley. What I wrote was, that they were brighter and sweeter and better than those other roses by Bendemeer's Stream.

I thought of the affair all day long. I thought of it when I was going to bed at night. Putting out the candle, I leaned from my window and looked down on the desolate garden. The roses had made its beauty.

"Johnny! Johnny lad! Are you in bed?"

The cautious whisper came from Tod. Bringing my head inside the room, I saw him at the door in his slippers and braces.

"Come into my room," he whispered. "Those fellows who disturbed us the other night are at the gate again."

Tod's light was out and his window open. We could see a man bending down outside the gate, fumbling with its lock. Presently the bell was pulled very gently, as if the ringer thought the house might be asleep and he did not want to awaken it. There was something quite ghostly to the imagination in being disturbed at night like this.

"Who's there?" shouted Tod.

"I am," answered a cautious voice. "I want to see Captain Copperas."

"Come along, Johnny. This is getting complicated."

We went out to the gate, and saw a man: he was not either of the two who had come before. Tod answered him as he had answered them, but did not open the gate.

"Are you a friend of the Captain's?" whispered the man.

"Yes, I am," said Tod. "What then?"

"Well, see here," resumed he, in a confidential tone. "If I don't get to see him it will be the worse for him. I come as a friend; come to warn him."

"But I tell you he is not in the house," argued Tod. "He has let it to me. He has left Cray Bay. His address? No, I cannot give it you."

"Very well," said the man, evidently not believing a word, "I am come out of friendliness. If you know where he is, you just tell him that Jobson has been here, and warns him to look out for squalls. That's all."

"I say, Johnny, I shall begin to fancy we are living in some mysterious castle, if this kind of thing is to go on," remarked Tod, when the man had gone. "It seems deuced queer, altogether."

It seemed queerer still the next morning. For a gentleman walked in and demanded payment for the furniture. Captain Copperas had forgotten to settle for it, he said—if he *had* gone away. Failing the payment, he should be obliged to take away the chairs and tables. Tod flew in a rage, and ordered him out of the place. Upon which their tongues went in for

a pitched battle, and gave out some unorthodox words. Cooling down by-and-by, an explanation was come to.

He was a member of some general furnishing firm, ten miles off. Captain Copperas had done them the honour to furnish his house from their stores, including the piano, paying a small portion on account. Naturally they wanted the rest. In spite of certain strange doubts that were arising touching Captain Copperas, Tod resolutely refused to give any clue to his address. Finally the applicant agreed to leave matters as they were for three or four days, and wrote a letter to be forwarded to Copperas.

But the news that arrived from Liverpool staggered us more than all. The brokers sent back Tod's first letter to Copperas (telling him of the grenadier's having marched off with the linen), and wrote to say that they didn't know any Captain Copperas; that no gentleman of that name was in their employ, or in command of any of their ships.

As Tod had remarked, it seemed deuced queer. People began to come in, too, for petty accounts that appeared to be owing—a tailor, a bootmaker, and others. Betty shed tears.

One evening, when we had come in from a long day's fishing, and were sitting at dinner in rather a gloomy mood, wondering what was to be the end of it, we caught sight of a man's coat whisking its tails up to the front-door.

"Sit still," cried Tod to me, as the bell rang. "It's another of those precious creditors. Betty! don't you open the door. Let the fellow cool his heels a bit."

But, instead of cooling his heels, the fellow stepped aside to our open window, and stood there, looking in

at us. I leaped out of my chair, and nearly out of my skin. It was Mr. Brandon.

"And what do you two fine gentlemen think of yourselves?" began he, when we had let him in. "You don't starve, at any rate, it seems."

"You'll take some, won't you, Mr. Brandon?" said Tod politely, putting the breast of a duck upon a plate, while I drew a chair for him to the table.

Ignoring the offer, he sat down by the window, threw his yellow silk handkerchief across his head, as a shade against the sun and the air, and opened upon our delinquencies in his thinnest tones. In the Squire's absence, Mrs. Todhetley had given him my letter to read, and begged him to come and see after us, for she feared Tod might be getting himself into some inextricable mess. Old Brandon's sarcasms were keen. To make it worse, he had heard of the new complications, touching Copperas and the furniture, at the Whistling Wind.

"So!" said he, "you must take a house and its responsibilities upon your shoulders, and pay the money down, and make no inquiries!"

"We made lots of inquiries," struck in Tod, wincing.

"Oh, did you? Then I was misinformed. You took care to ascertain whether the landlord of the house would accept you as tenant; whether the furniture was the man's own to sell, and had no liabilities upon it; whether the rent and taxes had been paid up to that date?"

As Tod had done nothing of the kind, he could only slash away at the other duck, splashing the stuffing about, and bite his lips.

"You took to a closet of linen, and did not think it necessary to examine whether linen was there, or whether it was all dumb-show——"

"I'm sure the linen was there when we saw it," interrupted Tod.

"You can't be sure; you did not handle it, or count it. The Squire told you you would hasten to make ducks and drakes of your five hundred pounds. It must have been burning a hole in your pocket. As to you, Johnny Ludlow, I am utterly surprised: I did give you credit for possessing some sense."

"I could not help it, sir. I'm sure I should never have mistrusted Captain Copperas." But doubts had floated in my mind whether the linen had not gone away in those boxes of Miss Copperas, that I saw the grenadier packing.

Tod pulled a letter-case out of his breast-pocket, selected a paper, and handed it to Mr. Brandon. It was the cheque for one hundred pounds.

"I thought of you, sir, before I began upon the ducks and drakes. But you were not at home, and I could not give it you then. And I thank you very much indeed for what you did for me."

Mr. Brandon read the cheque and nodded his head sagaciously.

"I'll take it, Joseph Todhetley. If I don't, the money will only go in folly." By which I fancied he had not meant to have the money repaid to him.

"I think you are judging me rather hardly," said Tod. "How was I to imagine that the man was not on the square? When the roses were here, the place was the prettiest place I ever saw. And it was dirt-cheap."

"So was the furniture, to Copperas," cynically observed Mr. Brandon.

"What is done is done," growled Tod. "May I give you some raspberry pudding?"

"Some what? Raspberry pudding! Why, I should not digest it for a week. I want to know what you are going to do."

"*I* don't know, sir. Do you?"

"Yes. Get out of the place to-morrow. You can't stay in it with bare walls: and it's going to be stripped, I hear. Green simpletons, you must be! I dare say the landlord will let you off by paying him three months' rent. I'll see him myself. And you'll both come home with me, like two young dogs with their tails burnt."

"And lose all the money I've spent?" cried Tod.

"Ay, and think yourself well off that it is not more. You possess no redress; as to finding Copperas, you may as well set out to search for the philosopher's stone. It is nobody's fault but your own; and if it shall bring you caution, it may be an experience cheaply bought."

"I could never have believed it of a sailor," Tod remarked ruefully to old Druff, when we were preparing to leave.

"Ugh! fine sailor he was!" grunted Druff. "*He* warn't a sailor. Not a reg'lar one. Might ha' been about the coast a bit in a collier, perhaps—naught more. As to that grenadier, I believe she was just another of 'em—a sister."

But we heard a whiff of news later that told us Captain Copperas was not so bad as he seemed. After he had taken Rose Lodge and furnished it, some

friend, for whom in his good-nature he had stood surety to a large amount, let him in for the whole, and ruined him. Honest men are driven into by-paths sometimes.

And so that was the inglorious finale to our charming retreat by Bendemeer's Stream.

THE OTHER EARRING.

"And if I could make sure that you two boys would behave yourselves and give me no trouble, possibly I might take you this year, just for a treat."

"Behave ourselves!" exclaimed Tod, indignantly resentful. "Do you think we are two children, sir?"

"We would be as good as gold, sir," I added, turning eagerly to the Squire.

"Well, Johnny, I'm not much afraid but that you would. Perhaps I'll trust you both, then, Joe."

"Thank you, father."

"I shall see," added the Pater, thinking it well to put in a little qualification. "It's not quite a promise, mind. But it must be two or three years now, I think, since you went to them."

"It seems like six," said Tod. "I know it's four."

We were talking of Worcester Races. At that period they used to take place early in August. Dr. Frost had an unpleasant habit of reassembling his pupils either the race week or the previous one; and to get over to the races was nearly as difficult for Tod and for me as though they had been run in California. To hear the Pater say he might perhaps take us this year, just as the Midsummer holidays were drawing to

an end, and say it voluntarily, was as good as it was unexpected. He meant it, too; in spite of the added reservation: and Dr. Frost was warned that he need not expect us until the race week was at its close.

The Squire drove into Worcester on the Monday, to be ready for the races on Tuesday morning, with Tod, myself, and the groom—Giles; and put up, as usual, at the Star and Garter. Sometimes he only drove in and back on each of the three race days; or perhaps on two of them: this he could do very well from Crabb Cot, but it was a good pull for the horses from Dyke Manor. This year, to our intense gratification, he meant to stay in the town.

The Faithful City was already in a bustle. It had put on its best appearance, and had its windows cleaned: some of the shop-fronts were being polished off as we drove slowly up the streets. Families were, like ourselves, coming in: more would come before night. The theatre was open, and we went to it after dinner; and saw, I remember, "Guy Mannering" (over which the Pater went to sleep), and an after-piece with a ghost in it.

The next morning I took the nearest way from the hotel to Sansome Walk, and went up it to call on one of our fellows who lived near the top. His friends always let him stay at home for the race week. A servant-maid came running to answer my knock at the door.

"Is Harry Parker at home?"

"No, sir," answered the girl, who seemed to be cleaning up for the races on her own account, for her face and arms were all colly. "Master Harry have gone down to Pitchcroft, I think."

"I hope he has gone early enough!" said I, feeling disappointed. "Why, the races won't begin for hours yet."

"Well, sir," she said, "I suppose there's a deal more life to be seen there than here, though it is early in the day."

That might easily be. For of all solitary places Sansome Walk was, in those days, the dreariest, especially portions of it. What with the overhanging horse-chestnut trees, and the high dead wall behind those on the one hand, and the flat stretch of lonely fields on the other, Sansome Walk was what Harry Parker used to call a caution. You might pass through all its long length from end to end and never meet a soul.

Taking that narrow by-path on my way back that leads into the Tything by St. Oswald's Chapel, and whistling a bar of the sweet song I had heard at the theatre over night, "There's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream," somebody came swiftly advancing down the same narrow path, and I prepared to back sideways to give her room to pass—a young woman with a large shabby shawl on, and the remains of faded gentility about her.

It was Lucy Bird! As she drew near, lifting her sad sweet eyes to mine with a mournful smile, my heart gave a great throb of pity. Faded, worn, anxious, reduced!—oh, how unlike she was, poor girl, to the once gay and charming Lucy Ashton!

"Why, Lucy! I did not expect to see you in Worcester! We heard you had left it months ago."

"Yes, we left last February for London," she an-

swered. "Captain Bird has only come down for the races."

As she took her hand from underneath her shawl to respond to mine, I saw that she was carrying some cheese and a paper of cold cooked meat. She must have been buying the meat at the cook's shop, as the Worcester people called it, which was in the middle of High Street. Oh! what a change—what a change for the delicately-bred Lucy Ashton! Better that her Master of Ravenswood had buried his horse and himself in the flooded land, as the other one did, than have brought her to this.

"Where are you going to, down this dismal place, Lucy?"

"Home," she answered. "We have taken lodgings at the top of Sansome Walk."

"At one of the cottages a little beyond it?"

"Yes, at one of those. How are you all, Johnny? How is Mrs. Todhetley?"

"Oh, she's first-rate. Got no neuralgia just now."

"Is she at Worcester?"

"No, at Dyke Manor. She would not come. The Squire drove us in yesterday. We are at the Star."

"Ah! yes," she said, her eyes taking a dreamy, far-off look. "I remember staying at the Star myself one race week. Papa brought me. It was the year I left school."

How things were altered with her! Carrying home papers of cheese and cooked meat!

"Have you heard or seen anything of my brothers lately, Johnny Ludlow?"

"Not since we were last staying at Crabb Cot. We went to Timberdale Church one day and heard

your brother Charles preach; and we dined once with Robert at the Court, and he and his wife came once to dine with us. But—have you not seen your brother James here?"

"No—and I would rather not see him. He would be sure to ask me painful questions."

"But he is always about the streets here, seeing after his patients, Lucy. I wonder you have not met him."

"We only came down last Saturday: and I go out as little as I can," she said; a kind of evasiveness—or rather, perhaps, hesitation—in her tone and manner that struck me. "I did think I saw James's carriage before me just now as I came up the Tything. It turned into Britannia Square."

"I dare say. We met it yesterday in Sidbury as we drove in."

"His practice gets large, I suppose. You say Charles was preaching at Timberdale?" she added: "was Herbert Tanerton ill?"

"Yes. Ailing, that is. Your brother came over to take the duty for the day. Will you call at the Star to see the Squire, Lucy? You know how pleased he would be."

"N—o," she answered, her manner still more hesitating, just as though she were in a peck of inward doubt; and she seemed to be debating some matter mentally. "I—I would have come after dark, had Mrs. Todhetley been there. At least I think I would—I don't know."

"You can come all the same, Lucy."

"But no—that would not have done," she went on to herself, in a half whisper. "I might have been

seen. It would never have done to risk it. The truth is, Johnny, I ought to see Mrs. Todhetley on a matter of business. Though even if she were here, I do not know that I might dare to see her. It is—not exactly my own business—and—and mischief might come of it."

"Is it anything I can say to her for you?"

"I—think—you might," she returned slowly, pausing, as before, between her words. "I know you are to be trusted, Johnny."

"That I am. I'd not forget a single item of the message."

"I did not mean in that way. I shall have to entrust to you a private matter—a disagreeable secret. It is a long while that I have wanted to tell some of you; ever since last winter: and yet, now that the opportunity has come that I may do it, I scarcely dare. The Squire is hasty and impulsive, his son is proud; but I think I may confide in you, Johnny."

"Only try me, Lucy."

"Well, I will. *I will.* I know you are true as steel. Not this morning, for I cannot stop—and I am not prepared. Let me see: where shall we meet again? No, no, Johnny, I cannot venture to the hotel: it is of no use to suggest that."

"Shall I come to your lodgings?"

She just shook her head by way of dissent, and remained in silent thought. I could not imagine what it was she had to tell me that required all this preparation; but it came into my mind to be glad that I had chanced to go that morning to Harry Parker's.

"Suppose you meet me in Sansome Walk this afternoon, Johnny Ludlow? Say at"—considering—

"yes, at four o'clock. That will be a safe hour, for they will be on the racecourse and out of the way. People will, I mean," she added hastily: but somehow I did not think she had meant people. "Can you come?"

"I will manage it."

"And, if you don't meet me at that time—it is just possible that I may be prevented coming out—I will be there at eight o'clock this evening instead," she continued. "That I know I can do."

"Very well. I'll be sure to be there."

Hardly waiting another minute to say good-morning, she went swiftly on. I began wondering what excuse I could make for leaving the Squire's carriage in the midst of the sport, and whether he would let me leave it.

But the way for that was paved without any effort of mine. At the early lunch, the Squire, in the openness of his heart, offered a seat in the phaeton to some old acquaintance from Martley. Which of course would involve Tod's sitting behind with me, and Giles's being left out altogether.

"Catch me at it!" cried Tod. "You can do as you please, Johnny: I shall go to the course on foot."

"I will also," I said—though you, naturally, understand that I had never expected to sit elsewhere than behind. And I knew it would be easier for me to lose Tod in the crowd, and so get away to keep the appointment, than it would have been to elude the Squire's questioning as to why I could want to leave the carriage.

Lunch over, Tod said he would go to the Bell, to see whether the Letsoms had come in; and we started

off. No; the waiter had seen nothing of them. Onwards, down Broad Street we went, took the Quai, and so got on that way to Pitchcroft—as the racecourse is called. The booths and shows were at this end, and the chief part of the crowd. Before us lay stretched the long expanse of the course, green and level as a bowling-green. The grand-stand (comparatively speaking a new erection there) lay on the left, higher up, the winning-chair and distance-post facing it. Behind the stand, flanking all that side of Pitchcroft, the beautiful river Severn flowed along between its green banks, the houses of Henwick, opposite, looking down upon it from their great height, over their sloping gardens. It was a hot day, the blue sky dark and cloudless.

"True and correct card of all the running horses, gentlemen: the names, weights, and colours o' the riders!" The shouted-out words, echoing on all sides from the men who held these cards for sale, are repeated in my brain now; as are other sounds and sights. I was somewhat older then than I had been; but it was not so very long since those shows, ranged around there side by side, a long line of them, held the greatest attraction for me in life. "Guy Mannering," the past night, had been very nice to see, very enjoyable; but it possessed not the nameless charm of that first "play" I went to in Scowton's Show on the racecourse. *That* charm could never come again. And I was but a lad yet.

The lightning with which the play opened had been real lightning to me; the thunder, real thunder. The gentleman who stood, when the curtain rose, gorgeously attired in a scarlet doublet slashed with

gold (something between a king and a bandit), with uplifted face of terror and drawn sword, calling the war of the elements "tremendious," was to me a greater potentate than nearly the world could contain! The young lady, his daughter, in ringlets and spangles, who came flying on in the midst of the storm, and fell at his feet with upraised arms and a piteous appeal, "Alas! my father, and will you not consent to my marriage with Alphonso?" seemed more lovely to me than the Sultanas in the "Arabian Nights," or the Princesses in Fairyland. I sat there entranced and speechless. A new world had opened to me—a world of delight. For weeks and weeks afterwards, that play, with its wondrous beauties, its shifting scenes, was present to me sleeping and waking.

The ladies in spangles, the gentlemen in slashed doublets, were on the platforms of their respective shows to-day, dancing for the benefit of Pitchcroft. Now and again a set would leave off, the music ceasing also, to announce that the performance was about to commence. I am not sure but I should have gone up to see one, but for the presence of Tod and Harry Parker—whom we had met on the course. There were learned pigs, and spotted calves, and striped zebras; and gingerbread and cake stalls; and boat-swings and merry-go-rounds—which had made me frightfully sick once when Hannah let me go in one. And there was the ever-increasing throng, augmenting incessantly; carriages, horsemen, shoals of foot-passengers; conjurers and fortune-tellers; small tables for the game of "thimble-rig," their owners looking out very sharply for the constables who might chance to be looking for *them;* and the movable exhibitions of dancing dolls

and Punch and Judy. Ay, the sounds and the sights are in my brain now. The bands of the different shows, mostly attired in scarlet and gold, all blowing and drumming as hard as they could drum and blow; the shouted-out invitations to the admiring spectators, "Walk up, ladies and gentlemen, the performance is just a-going to begin;" the scraping of the blind fiddlers; the screeching of the ballad-singers; the sudden uproar as a stray dog, attempting to cross the course, is hunted off it; the incessant jabber and the Babel of tongues; and the soft roll of wheels on the turf.

Hark! The bell rings for the clearing of the course. People know what it means, and those who are cautious hasten at once to escape under the cords on either side. The gallop of a horse is heard, its rider, in his red coat and white smalls, loudly smacking his whip to effect the clearance. The first race is about to begin. All the world presses towards the environs of the grand-stand to get a sight of the several horses entered for it. Here they come; the jockeys in their distinguishing colours, trying their horses in a brisk canter, after having been weighed in the paddock. A few minutes, and the start is effected; they are off!

It is only a two-mile heat. The carriages are all drawn up against the cords; the foot-passengers press it; horsemen get where they can. And now the excitement is at its height; the rush of the racers coming in to the winning-post breaks on the ear. They fly like the wind.

At that moment I caught sight of the sharply eager face of a good-looking, dashing man, got up to per-

fection—you might have taken him for a lord at least. Arm-in-arm with him stood another, well-got-up also, as a sporting country gentleman; he wore a green cut-away coat, top-boots, and a broad-brimmed hat which shaded his face. If I say "got-up," it is because I knew the one, and I fancied I knew the other. But the latter's face was partly turned from me, and hidden, as I have said, by the hat. Both watched the swiftly-coming race-horses with ill-concealed anxiety: and both, as well-got-up gentlemen at ease, strove to appear indifferent.

"Tod, there's Captain Bird."

"Captain Bird! Where! You are always fancying things, Johnny."

"A few yards lower down. Close to the cords."

"Oh, be shot to the scoundrel, and so it is! What a swell! Don't bother. Here they come."

"Blue cap wins!" "No; red sleeves gains on him!" "Yellow stripes is first!" "Pink jacket has it!" "By Jove! the bay colt is distanced!" "Purple wins by a neck!"

With the hubbub of these called-out different versions from the bystanders echoing on our ears, the horses flew past in a rush and a whirl. Black cap and white jacket was the winner.

Amid the crowding and the pushing and the excitement that ensued, I tried to get nearer to Captain Bird. Not to see *him:* it was impossible to look at him with any patience and contrast his dashing appearance with that of poor, faded Lucy's: but to see the other man. For he put me in mind of the gentleman-detective, Eccles, who had loomed upon us at Crabb Cot that Sunday afternoon in the past winter,

polished off the sirloin of beef, crammed the Squire with anecdotes of his college life, and finally made off with the other earring.

You can turn back to the paper called Mrs. Todhetley's Earrings, and recall the circumstances. How she lost an earring out of her ear: a beautiful earring of pink topaz encircled with diamonds. It was supposed a tramp had picked it up; and the Squire went about it to the police at Worcester. On the following Sunday a gentleman called introducing himself as Mr. Eccles, a private detective, and asking to look at the other earring. The Squire was marvellously taken with him, ordered in the beef, not long gone out from the dinner, and was as eager to entrust the earring to him as he was to take it. That Eccles had been a gentleman once—at least, that he had mixed with gentlemen, was easy to be seen: and perhaps had also been an Oxford man, as he asserted; but he was certainly a swindler now. He carried off the earring; and we had never seen him, or it, from that day to this. But I did think I saw him now on the racecourse. In the side face, and the tall, well-shaped figure of the top-booted country gentleman, with the heavy bunch of seals hanging to his watch-chain, who leaned on that man Captain Bird's arm, there was a great resemblance to him. The other earring, lost first, was found in the garden under a small fir-tree when the snow melted away, where it must have dropped unseen from Mrs. Todhetley's ear, as she stopped in the path to shake the snow from the tree.

But the rush of people, sweeping by, was too great. Captain Bird and he were nowhere to be seen. In the confusion also I lost Tod and Harry Parker. The

country gentleman I meant to find if I could, and went about looking for him.

The carriages were coming away from their standing-places near the ropes to drive about the course, as was the custom in those days. Such a thing as taking the horses out of a carriage and letting it stay where it was until the end of the day, was not known on Worcester racecourse. You might count the carriages-and-four there then, their inmates exchanging greetings with each other in passing, as they drove to and fro. It was a sight to see the noblemen's turnouts; the glittering harness, the array of servants in their sumptuous liveries; for they came in style to the races. The meeting on the course was the chief local event of the year, when all the county assembled to see each other and look their best.

"Will you get up now, Johnny?"

The soft bowling of the Squire's carriage-wheels arrested itself, as he drew up to speak to me. The Martley old gentleman sat with him, and there was a vacant place by Giles behind.

"No thank you, sir. I would rather be on foot."

"As you will, lad. Is your watch safe?"

"Oh, yes."

"Where's Joe?"

"Somewhere about. He is with Harry Parker. I have only just missed them."

"Missed them! Oh, and I suppose you are looking for them. A capital race, that last."

"Yes, sir."

"Mind you take care of yourself, Johnny," he called back, as he touched up Bob and Blister, to drive on.

I generally did take care of myself, but the Squire never forgot to remind me to do it.

The afternoon went on, and my search with it in the intervals of the racing. I could see nothing of those I wanted to see, or of Tod and Harry Parker. Our meeting, or not meeting, was just a chance, amid those crowds and crowds of human beings, constantly moving. Three o'clock had struck, and as soon as the next race should be over—a four-mile heat—it would be nearly time to think about keeping my appointment with Lucy Bird.

And now once more set in all the excitement of the running. A good field started for the four-mile heat, more horses than had run yet.

I liked those four-mile heats on Worcester racecourse: when we watched the jockeys in their gay and varied colours twice round the course, describing the figure of eight, and coming in, hot and panting, at the end. The favourites this time were two horses named "Swallower" and "Master Ben." Each horse was well liked: and some betters backed one, some the other. Now they are off!

The running began slow and steady; the two favourites just ahead; a black horse (I forget his name, but his jockey wore crimson and purple) hanging on to them; most of the other horses lying outside. The two kept together all the way, and as they came in for the final run the excitement was intense.

"Swallower has it by a neck!" "No, Master Ben heads him!" "Ben wins; Swallower loses!" "Swallower has it; Ben's jockey is beat!" and so on, and so on. Amid the shouts and the commotion the result was announced—a dead heat.

So the race must be run again. I looked at my watch (which you may be sure I had kept carefully buttoned up under my jacket), wondering whether I could stay for it. That was uncertain; there was no knowing how long an interval would be allowed for breathing-time.

Suddenly there arose a frightful commotion above all the natural commotion of the course. People rushed towards one point; horsemen galloped thither, carriages bowled cautiously in their wake. The centre of attraction appeared to be on the banks of the river, just beyond the grand-stand. What was it? What had occurred? The yells were deafening; the pushing fearful. At last the cause was known: King Mob was ducking some offender in the Severn.

To get near, so as to see anything of the fun, was impossible; it was equally impossible to gather what he had done; whether picked a pocket, or cheated at betting. Those are the two offences that on Pitchcroft were then deemed deserving of the water. This time, I think, it was connected with betting.

Soon the yells became louder and nearer. Execrations filled the air. The crowd opened, and a wretched-looking individual emerged out of it on the hard run, his clothes dripping water, his lank hair hanging about his face like the slim tails of so many rats.

On he came, the mob shouting and hallooing in his wake, and brushed close past me. Why! it was surely the country gentleman I had seen with Bird! I knew him again at once. But whether it was the man Eccles or not, I did not see; he tore by swiftly, his head kept down. A broad-brimmed hat came flying after him, propelled by the feet of the crowd. He

stooped to catch it up, and then kept on his way right across the course, no doubt to make his escape from it. Yes, it was the same man in his top-boots. I was sure of that. Scampering close to his heels, fretting and yelling furiously, was a half-starved white dog with a tin kettle tied to its tail. I wondered which of the two was the more frightened—the dog or the man.

And standing very nearly close to me, as I saw then, was Captain Bird. Not running, not shouting; simply looking on with a countenance of supreme indifference, that seemed to express no end of languid contempt of the fun. Not a sign of recognition crossed his face as the half-drowned wight swept past him: nobody could have supposed he ever set eyes on him before. And when the surging crowd had passed, he sauntered away in the direction of the saddling-place.

But I lost the race. Though I stayed a little late, hoping to at last see the horses come out for the second start, and to count how many of the former field would compete for it, the minutes flew all too swiftly by, and I had to go, and to put the steam on. Making a bolt across Pitchcroft and up Salt Lane, went I, full split, over the Tything slantwise, and so down to Sansome Walk. St. Oswald's clock was tinkling out four as I reached it.

Lucy did not come. She had indicated the spot where the meeting should be; and I waited there, making the best I could of it; cooling myself, and looking out for her. At half-past four I gave her up in my own mind; and when five o'clock struck, I knew it was useless to stay longer. So I began to take my way back slower than I had come; and on turning out by St. Oswald's, I saw the carriages and people flock-

ing up on their way from Pitchcroft. The first day's racing was over.

There was a crowd at the top of Salt Lane, and I had to wait before I could get across. In the wake of a carriage-and-four that was turning out of it came Captain Bird, not a feather of his plumage ruffled, not a speck (save dust) on his superfine coat, not a wristband soiled. He had not been ducked, if his friend had.

"How d'ye do, Master Ludlow?" said he, with a grandly patronising air, and a flourish of his cane, as if it were a condescension to notice me. And I answered him civilly; though he must have been aware I knew what a scamp he was.

"I wish he'd steal away to America some moonlight night," ran my thoughts, "and leave poor Lucy in peace."

The Squire's carriage dashed up to the hotel as I reached it, Tod sitting behind with Giles. I asked which of the two horses had won. Swallower: won by half a neck. The Squire was in a glow of satisfaction, boasting of the well-contested race.

And now, to make things intelligible, I must refer again for a minute or two to that past paper. It may be remembered that when "Detective Eccles" called on us that Sunday afternoon, asking to look at the fellow earring to the one lost, Mrs. Todhetley had gone in to the Coneys', and the Squire sent me for her. When I got there, Lucy Bird was in the drawing-room alone, the Mater being upstairs with Mrs. Coney. Poor Lucy told me she had been spending a day or two at Timberdale Court (her happy childhood's home), and had come over to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Coney, who

were always kind to her, she added with a sobbing sigh; but she was going back to Worcester by the next train. I told her what I had come for—of the detective's visit and his request to see the other earring. Mrs. Todhetley felt nervous at meeting a real live detective, and asked me no end of questions as to what this particular one was like. I said he was no tiger to be afraid of, and described him as well as I could: a tall, slender, gentlemanly man, well-dressed; gold studs, a ring on his finger, a blue necktie, and a black moustache. Lucy (I had noticed at the time) seemed struck with the description; but she made no remark. Before we turned in at our gate we saw her leave the Coneys' house, and come stepping through the snow on her way to the station. Since then, until now, we had not seen anything of Lucy Bird.

The stars flickered through the trees in Sansome Walk as I turned into it. A fine trouble I had had to come! Some entertainment was in full fling that evening at the Saracen's Head—a kind of circus, combined with rope-dancing. Worcester would be filled with shows during the race-week (I don't mean those on Pitchcroft), and we went to as many as we could get money for. We had made the bargain with Harry Parker on the course to go to this one, and during the crowded dinner Tod asked the Squire's leave. He gave it with the usual injunctions to take care of ourselves, and on condition that we left our watches at home. So, there I was in a fix; neither daring to say at the dinner-table that I could not go, nor daring to

say what prevented it, for Lucy had bound me to secrecy.

"What time is this thing going to be over to-night, Joe?" had questioned the Squire, who was drinking port wine with some more old gentlemen at one end of the table, as we rose to depart.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Tod. "About ten o'clock, I dare say."

"Well, mind you come straight home, you two. I won't have you getting into mischief. Do you hear, Johnny?"

"What mischief do you suppose, sir, we are likely to get into?" fired Tod.

"*I* don't know," answered the Squire. "When I was a young lad—younger than you—staying here for the races with my father—but we stayed at the Hop-pole, next door, which was the first Inn then—I remember we were so wicked one night as to go about ringing and knocking at all the doors——"

"You and your father, sir?" asked Tod, innocently.

"My father! no!" roared the Squire. "What do you mean, Joe? How dare you! My father go about the town knocking at doors and ringing at bells! How dare you suggest such an idea! We left my father, sir, at the hotel with his friends at their wine, as you are leaving me with my friends here now. It was I and half-a-dozen other young rascals who did it—more shame for us. I can't be sure how many bell-wires we broke. The world has grown wiser since then, though I don't think it's better; and—and mind you walk quietly home. Don't get into a fight, or quarrel, or anything of that kind. The streets are sure to be full of rough people and pickpockets."

Harry Parker was waiting for us in the hotel gateway. He said he feared we should be late, and thought we must have been eating dinner for a week by the time we took over it.

"I'm not coming with you, Tod," I said; "I'll join you presently."

Tod turned round and faced me. "What on earth's that for, Johnny?"

"Oh, nothing. I'll come soon. You two go on."

"Suppose you don't get a place!" cried Parker to me.

"Oh, I shall get one fast enough: it won't be so crowded as all that."

"Now look here, lad," said Tod, with his face of resolution; "you are up to some dodge. What is it?"

"My head aches badly," I said—and that was true. "I can't go into that hot place until I have had a spell of fresh air. But I will be sure to join you later, if I can."

My headaches were always allowed. I had them rather often. Not the splitting, roaring pain that Tod would get in his head on rare occasions, once a twelvemonth, or so, when anything greatly worried him; but bad enough in all conscience. He said no more; and set off with Harry Parker up the street towards the Saracen's Head.

The stars were flickering through the trees in Sansome Walk, looking as bright as though it were a frosty night in winter. It was cool and pleasant: the great heat of the day—which must have given me my headache—had passed. Mrs. Bird was already at the spot. She drew me underneath the trees on the side, looking up the walk as though she feared she had been fol-

lowed. A burst of distant music crashed out and was borne towards us on the air: the circus band, at the Saracen's Head. Lucy still glanced back the way she had come.

"Are you afraid of anything, Lucy?"

"There is no danger, I believe," she answered; "but I cannot help being timid: for, if what I am doing were discovered, I—I—I don't know what they would do to me."

"You did not come this afternoon."

"No. I was very sorry, but I could not," she said, as we paced slowly about, side by side. "I had my shawl and bonnet on, when Edwards came in—a friend of my husband's, who is staying with him. He had somehow got into the Severn, and looked quite an object, his hair and clothes dripping wet, and his forehead bruised."

"Why, Lucy, he was ducked!" I cried excitedly. "I saw it all. That is, I saw the row; and I saw him when he made his escape across Pitchcroft. He had on a smart green cut-away coat, and top-boots."

"Yes, yes," she said; "I was sure it was something of that kind. When my husband came home later they were talking together in an undertone, Edwards cursing some betting-man, and Captain Bird telling Edwards that it was his own fault for not being more cautious. However, I could not come out, Johnny, though I knew you were waiting for me. Edwards asked, as impertinently as he dared, where I was off to. To buy some tea, I answered, but that it did not matter particularly, as I had enough for the evening. They think I have come out to buy it now."

"Do you mean to say, Lucy, that Captain Bird

denies you free liberty?—watches you as a cat does a mouse?"

"No, no; you must not take up wrong notions of my husband, Johnny Ludlow. Bad though the estimation in which he is held by most people is, he has never been really unkind to me. Trouble, frightful trouble he does bring upon me, for I am his wife and have to share it, but personally unkind to me he has never yet been."

"Well, I should think it unkind in your place, if I could not go out when I pleased, without being questioned. What do they suspect you would be after?"

"It is not Captain Bird; it is Edwards. As to what he suspects, I am sure he does not know himself; but he seems to be generally suspicious of everyone, and he sees I do not like him. I suppose he lives in general fear of being denounced to the police, for he is always doing what he calls 'shady' things; but he must know that he is safe with us. I heard him say to my husband the day before we left London, 'Why do you take your wife down?' Perhaps he thinks my brothers might be coming to call on me, and of course he does not want attention drawn to the place he may chance to be located in, whether here or elsewhere."

"What is his name, Lucy?"

"His name? Edwards."

"It's not Eccles, is it?"

She glanced quickly round as we walked, searching my face in the dusk.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because, when I first saw him to-day on the racecourse with Captain Bird, he put me in mind of the fine gentleman who came to us that Sunday at Crabb

Cot, calling himself Detective Eccles, and carried off Mrs. Todhetley's other earring."

Mrs. Bird looked straight before her, making no answer.

"*You* must remember that afternoon, Lucy. When I ran over to old Coney's for Mrs. Todhetley, you were there, you know; and I told you all about the earrings and the detective officer, then making his dinner of half-cold beef at our house while he waited for the mother to come home and produce the earring. Don't you remember? You were just going back to Worcester."

Still she said not a word.

"Lucy, I think it is the same man. Although his black moustache is gone, I feel sure it is he. The face and the tall slender figure are just like his."

"How singular!" she exclaimed, in a low tone to herself. "How strangely things come about!"

"But *is* it Eccles?"

"Johnny Ludlow," she said, catching my arm, and speaking in an excited, breathless whisper, "if you were to bring harm on me—that is, on him or on my husband through me, I should pray to die."

"But you need not be afraid. Goodness me, Lucy! don't you know that I'd not bring harm on anybody in the world, least of all on you? Why, you said to me this morning that I was true as steel."

"Yes, yes," she said, bursting into tears. "We have always been good friends, have we not, Johnny, since you, a little mite of a child in a tunic and turned-down frill, came to see me one day at school, a nearly grown-up young lady, and wanted to leave me your bright sixpence to buy gingerbread? Oh, Johnny, if

all people were but as loyal and true-hearted as you are!"

"Then, Lucy, why need you doubt me?"

"Do you not see the shadows of those leaves playing on the ground, cast by the light of that gas-lamp?" she asked. "Just as many shadows, dark as those, lie in the path of my life. They have taught me to fear an enemy where I ought to look for a friend; they have taught me that life is so full of unexpected windings and turnings, that we know not one minute what new fear the next may bring forth."

"Well, Lucy, you need not fear me. I have promised you to say nothing of having met you here; and I will say nothing, or of what you tell me."

"Promise it me again, Johnny. Faithfully."

Just a shade of vexation crossed my heart that she should think it needful to reiterate this; but I would not let my face or voice betray it.

"I promise it again, Lucy. Faithfully and truly."

"Ever since last winter I have wanted to hold communication with one of you at your home, and to restore something that had been lost. But it had to be done very, very cautiously, without bringing trouble on me or on anybody connected with me. Many a solitary hour, sitting by myself in our poor lodgings in London, have I deliberated whether I might venture to restore this, and how it was to be done; many a sleepless night have I passed, dwelling on it. Sometimes I thought I would send it anonymously by the post, but it might have been stolen by the way; sometimes it would occur to me to make a parcel of it and despatch it in that way. I never did either. I waited until some chance should bring me again near Mrs.

Todhetley. But to-day I saw that it would be better to trust you. She is true also, and kind; but she might not be able to keep the secret from the Squire, and he—he would be sure to betray it, though perhaps not intentionally, to all Timberdale, and there's no knowing what mischief might come of it."

Light flashed upon me as she spoke. As surely as though it were already before me in black and white, I knew what she was about to disclose.

"Lucy, it is the lost earring! The man staying with you *is* Eccles."

"Hush!" she whispered in extreme terror, for a footstep suddenly sounded close to us. Lucy glided behind the trunk of the tree we were passing, which in a degree served to hide her. How timid she was! what cause induced it?

The intruder was a shop-boy with an apron on, carrying a basket of grocery parcels to one of the few houses higher up. He turned his head and gave us a good stare, probably taking us for a pair of cooing lovers enjoying a stolen ramble by starlight. Setting up a shrill whistle, he passed on.

"I don't know what has come to me lately; my heart seems to beat at nothing," said poor Mrs. Bird, coming from behind the tree with her hand to her side. "And it was doubly foolish of me to go *there;* better that I had kept quietly walking on with you, Johnny."

"What *is* it that you are afraid of, Lucy?"

"Only of their seeing me; seeing me with you. Were they to do so, and it were to come out that the earring had been returned, they would know I had done it. They suspected me at the time—at least,

Edwards did. For it is the earring I am about to restore to you, Johnny."

She put a little soft white paper packet in my hand, that felt as if it had wool inside it. I hardly knew whether I was awake or asleep. The beautiful earring that we had given up for good, come back again! And the sound of the drums and trumpets burst once more upon our ears.

"You will give it to Mrs. Todhetley when you get home, Johnny. And I must leave it to your discretion to tell her what you think proper of whence you obtained it. Somewhat of course you must tell her, but how much or how little I leave with you. Only take care you bring no harm upon me."

"I am sure, Lucy, that Mrs. Todhetley may be trusted."

"Very well. Both of you must be secret as the grave. It is for my sake, tell her, that I implore it. Perhaps she will keep the earring by her for a few months, saying nothing, so that this visit of ours into Worcestershire may be quite a thing of the past, and no suspicion, in consequence of it, as connected with the earring, may arise in my husband's mind. After that, when months have elapsed, she must contrive to let it appear that the earring is then, in some plausible way or other, returned to her."

"Rely upon it, we will take care. It will be managed very easily. But how did you get the earring, Lucy?"

"It has been in my possession ever since the night of the day you lost it; that Sunday afternoon, you know. I have carried it about with me everywhere."

"Do you mean carried it upon you?"

"Yes; upon me."

"I wonder you never lost it—a little thing like this!" I said, touching the soft packet that lay in my jacket pocket.

"I could not lose it," she whispered. "It was sewn into my clothes."

"But, Lucy, how did you manage to get it?"

She gave me the explanation in a few low, rapid words, glancing about her as she did it. Perhaps I had better repeat it in my own way; and to do that we must go back to the Sunday afternoon. At least, that will render it more intelligible and ship-shape. But I did not learn the one-half of the details then: no, nor for a long time afterwards. And so, we go back again in imagination to the time of that January day, when we were honoured by the visit of "Detective Eccles," and the snow was lying on the ground, and Farmer Coney's good fires were blazing hospitably.

Lucy Bird quitted the warm fires and her kind friends, the Coneys, and followed us out—me and Mrs. Todhetley—she saw us turn in at our own gate, and then she picked her way through the snow to the station at South Crabb. It was a long walk for her in that inclement weather; but she had been away from home (if the poor lodgings they then occupied in Worcester could be called home) two days, and was anxious to get back. During her brief absences from it, she was always haunted by the fear of some ill falling on that precious husband of hers, Captain Bird; but he was nothing but an ex-captain, as you know. All the way to the station she was thinking about the earrings, and of my description of Detective Eccles. The

description was exactly that of her husband's friend, Edwards, both as to person and dress; not that she supposed it could be he. When she left Worcester nearly two days before, Edwards had just arrived. She knew him to be an educated man, of superior manners, and full of anecdote, when he chose, about college life. Like her husband, he had, by recklessness and ill-conduct, sunk lower and lower in the world, until he had to depend on "luck" or "chance" for a living.

Barely had Lucy reached the station, walking but slowly, when the train shot in. She took her seat; and, after a short halt the train moved on again. At that moment there strode into the station that self-same man, Edwards, who began shouting furiously for the train to stop, putting up his hands, running and gesticulating. The train declined to stop; trains generally do decline to stop for late passengers, however frantically adjured; and Edwards was left behind. His appearance astonished Lucy considerably. Had he, in truth, been passing himself off as a detective officer to Squire Todhetley? If so, with what motive? Lucy could not see any inducing motive, and still thought it could not be; that Edwards must be over here on some business of his own. The matter passed from her mind as she drew near Worcester, and reached their lodgings, which were down Lowesmoor way.

Experience had taught Lucy not to ask questions. She was either not answered at all, or the answer would be sure to give her trouble. Captain Bird had grown tolerably careless as to whether his hazardous doings reached, or did not reach, the ears of his wife, but he did not willingly tell her of them. She said

not a word of having seen Edwards, or of what she had heard about the loss of Mrs. Todhetley's earring, or of the detective's visit to Crabb Cot. Lucy's whole life was one of dread and fear, and she never knew whether any remark of hers might not bear upon some dangerous subject. But while getting the tea, she did just inquire after Edwards.

"Has Edwards left?" she asked carelessly.

"No," replied Captain Bird, who was stretched out before the fire in his slippers, smoking a long pipe, and drinking spirits. "He is out on the loose, though, somewhere to-day."

It was late at night when Edwards entered. He was in a rage. Trains did not run frequently on Sundays, and he had been kept all that while at South Crabb junction, waiting for one. Lucy went upstairs to bed, leaving Edwards and her husband toping away at brandy and water. Both of them had had quite enough already.

The matter of the earrings and the doubt whether Mr. Edwards had been playing at amateur detectiveship would have ended there, but for the accident of Lucy's having to come downstairs again, to get the small travelling bag in which she had carried her combs and brushes. She had put it just inside the little back parlour, where a bed on chairs had been extemporised for Edwards, their lodgings not being very extensive. Lucy was picking up the bag in the dark, when some words in the sitting-room caught her ear; the door between the two rooms being partly open. Before a minute elapsed she had heard too much. Edwards, in a loud, gleeful, boasting tone, was telling how he had been acting the detective, and done the old

Squire and his wife out of the other earring. Lucy, looking in through the opening, saw him holding it up; she saw the colours of the long pink topaz drop, and of the diamonds gleaming in the candle-light.

"I thought I could relieve them of it," he said. "When I read that advertisement in the paper, it struck me there might be a field open to do a little stroke of business; and I've done it."

"You are a fool for your pains," growled Captain Bird. "There's sure to be a row."

"The row won't touch me. I'm off to London to-morrow morning, and the earring with me. I wonder what the thing will turn us in? Twenty pounds? There, put it in the box, Bird, and get out the dice."

The dice on a Sunday night!

Lucy felt quite sick as she went back upstairs. What would be the end of all this? Not of this one transaction in particular, but of all the other disgraceful transactions with which her husband was connected? It might come to some public exposure, some criminal trial at the Bar of Justice; and of that she had a horrible dread ever haunting her like a nightmare.

She undressed, and went to bed. One hour passed, two hours passed, three hours passed. Lucy turned and turned on her uneasy pillow, feeling fit to die. Besides her own anguish arising from *their* share in it, she was dwelling on the shameful wrong it did their kind friends at Crabb Cot.

The fourth hour was passing. Captain Bird had not come up, and Lucy grew uneasy on that score. Once, when he had taken too much (but as a general rule the ex-captain's delinquencies did not lie in that direction), he had set his shirt-sleeve on fire, and burnt

his hands badly in putting it out. Slipping out of bed, Lucy put on her slippers and the large old shawl, and crept down to see after him.

Opening the sitting-room door very softly, she looked in. The candles were alight still, but had burnt nearly down to the socket; the dice and some cards were scattered on the table.

Edwards lay at full length on the old red stuff sofa; Captain Bird had thrown himself outside the bed in the other room, the door of which was now wide open, neither of them having undressed. That both were wholly or partially intoxicated, Lucy felt not a doubt of.

Well, she could only leave them as they were. They would come to no harm asleep. Neither would the candles: which must soon burn themselves out. Lucy was about to shut the door again, when her eye fell on the little pasteboard box that contained the earring.

Without a moment's reflection, acting on the spur of impulse, she softly stepped to the table, lifted the lid, and took the earring out.

"I will remedy the wrong they have done Mrs. Todhetley," she said to herself. "They will never suspect me."

Up in her room again, she lighted her candle and looked about for some place to conceal the earring; and, just as the idea to secure it had come unbidden to her, so did that of a safe place of concealment. With feverish hands she undid a bit of the quilting of her petticoat, one that she had but just made for herself out of an old merino gown, slipped the earring in amid the wadding, and sewed it up again. It could

neither be seen nor suspected there; no, nor even felt, let the skirt be examined as it might. That done, poor Lucy got into bed again and at length fell asleep.

She was awakened by a commotion. It was broad daylight, and her husband (not yet as sober as he might be), was shaking her by the arm. Edwards was standing outside the door, calling out to know whether Mrs. Bird had "got it."

"What is the matter, George?" she cried, starting up in a fright, and for the moment completely forgetting where she was, for she had been aroused from a vivid dream of Timberdale.

"Have you been bringing anything up here from the sitting-room, Lucy?" asked Captain Bird.

"No, nothing," she replied promptly, and he saw that she spoke with truth. For Lucy's recollection had not come to her; she remembered nothing yet about the earring.

"There's something missing," said Captain Bird, speaking thickly. "It has disappeared mysteriously off the sitting-room table. You are sure you have not been down and collared it, Lucy?"

The earring and the theft—her own theft—flashed into her memory together. Oh, if she could but avert suspicion from herself! And she strove to call up no end of surprise in her voice.

"Why, how could I have been down, George? Did you not see that I was fast asleep? What have you missed? Some money?"

"Money, no. It was—something of Edwards'. Had it close by him on the table when he went to sleep, he says—he lay on the sofa last night and I had his bed

— and this morning it was gone. I thought the house was on fire by the fierce way he came and shook me."

"I'll look for it when I come down, if you tell me what it is," said poor Lucy. "How late I have slept! It must have been the cold journey."

"She has not got it," said Captain Bird, retreating to his friend outside, and closing the door on Lucy. "Knows nothing about it. Was asleep till I awoke her."

"Search the room, you fool," cried the excited Edwards. "I'd never trust the word of a woman. No offence to your wife, Bird, but it is *not* to be trusted."

"Rubbish!" said Captain Bird.

"Either she or you must have got it. It could not disappear without hands. The people down below have not been to our rooms, as you must know."

"She or I—what do you mean by that?" retorted Captain Bird; and a short sharp quarrel ensued. That the captain had not touched the earring, Edwards knew full well. It was Edwards who had helped him to reach the bed the previous night: and since then Bird had been in the deep sleep of stupor. But Edwards did think the captain's wife had. The result was that Captain Bird re-entered; and, ordering Lucy to lie still, he made as exact a search of the room as his semi-sobered faculties allowed. Lucy watched it from her bed. Amid the general hunting and turning-over of drawers and places, she saw him pick up her gown and petticoats one by one and shake them thoroughly, but he found no signs of the earring.

From that time to this the affair had remained a mystery. There had been no one in the house that

night, save the proprietor and his wife, two quiet old people who never concerned themselves with their lodgers. They protested that the street door had been fast, and that no midnight marauder could have broken in and slipped upstairs to steal a pearl brooch (as Edwards put it) or any other article. So, failing the feasibility of other outlets of suspicion, Edwards continued to suspect Lucy. There were moments when Bird did also: though he trusted her, in regard to it, on the whole. At any rate, Lucy was obliged to be most cautious. The quilted skirt had never been off her since, except at night: through the warm genial days of spring and the sultry heat of summer she had worn the clumsy wadded thing continually: and the earring had never been disturbed until this afternoon.

"You see how it is, Johnny," she said to me, with one of her sobbing sighs.

But at that moment the grocer's young man in the white apron came back down the walk, swinging his empty basket by the handle; and he took another good stare at us in passing.

"I mean, as to the peril I should be in if you suffer the restoration of the earring to transpire," she continued in a whisper, when he was at a safe distance. "Oh, Johnny Ludlow! do you and Mrs. Todhetley take care, for my poor sake!"

"Lucy, you need not doubt either of us," I said earnestly. "We will be, as you phrased it to-day, true as steel—and as cautious. Are you going back? Let me walk up to the top with you."

"No, no; we part here. The seeing us together might arouse some suspicion, and there is no absolute

certainty that they may not come out, though I don't think they will. Edwards is for ever thinking of that earring: he does not feel safe about it, you perceive. Go you that way: I go this. Farewell, Johnny Ludlow, farewell."

"Good-night, Lucy. I am off to the circus now."

She went with a brisk step up the walk. I ran out by St. Oswald's, and so on to the Saracen's Head. The place was crammed. I could not get near Tod and Harry Parker; but they whistled at me across the sawdust and the fancy steeds performing on it.

We sat together in Mrs. Todhetley's bed-room at Dyke Manor, the door bolted against intruders: she, in her astonishment at the tale I told, hardly daring to touch the earring. It was Saturday morning; we had come home from Worcester the previous evening; and should now be off to school in an hour. Tod had gone strolling out with the Squire; which gave me my opportunity.

"You see, good mother, how it all is, and the risk we run. Do you know, I had half a mind to keep the earring myself for some months and say never a word to you; only I was not sure of pitching on a safe hiding-place. It would be so dreadful a thing for Lucy Bird if it were to get known."

"Poor Lucy, poor Lucy!" she said, the tears on her light eyelashes. "Oh, Johnny, if she could but be induced to leave that man!"

"But she can't, you know. Robert Ashton has tried over and over to get her back to the Court—and tried in vain. See how it shines!"

I was holding the earring so that the rays of the sun fell upon it, flashing and sparkling. It seemed more beautiful than it used to be.

"I am very, very glad to have it back, Johnny; the other one was useless without it. You have not," with a tone of apprehension in her voice, "told Joseph?"

I shook my head. The truth was, I had never longed to tell anything so much in my life: for what did I ever conceal from him? It was hard work, I can assure you. The earring burning a hole in my pocket, and I not able to show Tod that it was there!

"And now, mother, where will you put it?"

She rose to unlock a drawer, took from it a small blue box in the shape of a trunk, and unlocked that.

"It is in this that I keep all my little valuables, Johnny. It will be quite safe here. By-and-by we must invent some mode of 'recovering the earring,' as poor Lucy said."

Lifting the lid of a little pasteboard box, she showed me the fellow earring lying in a nest of cotton. I took it out.

"Put them both into your ears for a minute, good mother! Do!"

She smiled, hesitated; then took out the plain rings that were in her ears, and put in those of the beautiful pink topaz and diamond. Going to the glass to look at herself, she saw the Squire and Tod advancing in the distance. It sent us into a panic. Scuffling the ear-rings out of her ears, she laid them together on the wool in the cardboard box, put the lid on, and folded it round with white paper.

"Light one of the candles on my dressing-table,

Johnny. We will seal it up for greater security: there's a bit of red sealing-wax in the tray." And I did so at her direction; stamping it with the seal that had been my father's, and which with his watch they had only recently allowed me to take into wearing.

"There," she said, "should anybody by chance see that packet, though it is not likely, and be curious to know what it contains, I shall say that I cannot satisfy them, as it concerns Johnny Ludlow."

"Are you upstairs, Johnny? What in the world are you doing there?"

I went leaping down at Tod's call. All was safe now.

That's how the other earring came back. And "Eccles" had to be let off scot free. But I was glad he got the ducking.

LEE, THE LETTER-MAN.

In a side lane of Timberdale, just off the churchyard, was the cottage of Jael Batty, whose name you have heard before. Side by side with it stood another cottage, inhabited by Lee, the assistant letter-carrier; or, as Timberdale generally called him, the letter-man. These cottages had a lively look-out, the farrier's shop and a few thatched hayricks opposite; sideways, the tombstones in the graveyard.

Some men are lucky in life, others are unlucky. Andrew Lee was in the latter category. He had begun life as a promising farmer, but came down in the world. First of all, he had to pay a heap of money for some man who had persuaded him to become his security, and that stripped him of his means. Afterwards a series of ill-fortune set in on the farm: crops failed, cattle died, and Lee was sold up. Since then, he had tried at this and tried at that; been in turn a farmer's labourer, an agent for coal, and the proprietor of a shop devoted to the benefit of the younger members of the community, its speciality being bull's-eyes and besoms for birch-rods. For some few years now he had settled down in this cot-

tage next door to Jael Batty's, and carried out the letters at fourteen shillings a week.

There were two letter-men, Spicer and Lee. But there need not have been two, only that Timberdale was so straggling a parish, the houses in it lying far and wide. Like other things in this world, fortune, even in so trifling a matter as these two postmen, was not dealt out equally. Spicer had the least work, for he took the home delivery, and had the most pay; Lee did all the country tramping, and had only the fourteen shillings. But when the place was offered to Lee he was at a very low ebb indeed and took it thankfully, and thought he was set up in riches for life; for, as you well know, we estimate things by contrast.

Andrew Lee was not unlucky in his fortunes only. Of his three children, not any one had prospered. The son married all too young; within a year he and his wife were both dead, leaving a baby-boy to Lee as a legacy. The elder daughter had emigrated to the other end of the world with her husband; and the younger daughter had a history. She was pretty and good and gentle, but just a goose. Goose that she was, though, all the parish liked Mamie Lee.

About four years before the time I am telling of, there came a soldier to Timberdale, on a visit to Spicer the letter-carrier, one James West. He was related to Spicer's wife; her nephew, or cousin, or something of that; a tall, good-looking, merry-tempered dragoon, with a dashing carriage and a dashing tongue; and he ran away with the heart of Mamie Lee. That might not so much have mattered in the long-run, for such privilege is universally allowed to the sons of

Mars; but he also ran away with her. One fine morning Mr. James West was missing from Timberdale, and Mamie Lee was missing also. The parish went into a rapture of indignation over it, not so much at him as at her; called her a "baggage," and hoping her folly would come home to her. Poor old Lee thought he had got his death-blow, and his hair turned grey swiftly.

Not more than twelve months had gone by when Mamie was back again. Jael Batty was running out one evening to get half a pound of sugar at Salmon's shop, when she met a young woman with a bundle staggering down the lane, and keeping under the side of the hedge as if she were afraid of falling, or else did not want to be seen. Too weak to carry the bundle, she seemed ready to sink at every step. Jael Batty, who had her curiosity like other people, though she was deaf, peered into the bent face, and brought herself up with a shriek.

"What, is it you, Mamie Lee! Well, the impedence of this! How on earth could you pick up the brass to come back here?"

"Are my poor father and mother alive? Do they still live here?" faltered Mamie, turning her piteous white face to Jael.

"They be, both alive; but it's no thanks to you. If they——Oh, if I don't believe—What have you got in that ragged old shawl?"

"It's my baby," answered Mamie; and she passed on.

Andrew Lee took her in amidst sobs and tears, and thanked Heaven she was come back, and welcomed her unreasonably. The parish went on at him for it, showering down plenty of abuse, and asking

whether he did not feel ashamed of himself. There was even a talk of his post as letter-carrier being taken from him; but it came to nothing. Rymer was postmaster then, though he was about giving it up; and he was a man of too much sorrow himself to inflict it needlessly upon another. On the contrary, he sent down cordials and tonics and things for Mamie, who had had a fever and come home dilapidated as to strength, and never charged for them. Thomas Rymer's own heart was slowly breaking, so he could feel for her.

The best or the worst of it was, that Mamie said she was married. Which assertion was of course not believed, and only added to her sin in the eyes of Timberdale. The tale she told was this. That James West had taken her straight to some town, where he had previously had the banns put up, and married her there. The day after the marriage they had sailed for Ireland, whither he had to hasten to join his regiment, his leave of absence having expired. At the end of some seven or eight months, the regiment was ordered to India, and he departed with it, leaving her in her obscure lodging at Cork. By-and-by her baby was born; she was very ill then, very; had fever and a cough, and sundry other complications; and what with lying ill eight weeks, and being obliged to pay a doctor and a nurse all that while, besides other expenses, she spent all the money Mr. James West left with her, and had no choice between starvation and coming back to Timberdale.

You should have heard how this account was scoffed at. The illness, and the baby, and the poverty nobody disputed—they were plain enough to be seen

by all Timberdale; and what better could she expect, they'd like to know? But when she came to talk about the church (or rather, old Lee for her, second-hand, for she was not at all a person now to be spoken to by Timberdale), then their tongues were let loose in all kinds of inconvenient questions. *Which* was the town?—and which was the church in it?—and where were her "marriage lines"? Mamie could give no answer at all. She did not know the name of the town, or where it was situated. James had taken her with him in the train to it, and that was all she knew; and she did not know the name of the church or the clergyman; and as to marriage lines, she had never heard of any. So, as Timberdale said, what could you make out of this, save one thing—that Mr. Jim West had been a deep rogue, and taken her in. At best, it could have been but a factitious ceremony; perhaps in some barn, got up like a church for the occasion, said the more tolerant, willing to give excuse for pretty Mamie if they could; but the chief portion of Timberdale looked upon the whole as an out-and-out invention of her own.

Poor Andrew Lee had never taken a hopeful view of the affair from the first; but he held to the more tolerant opinion that Mamie had been herself deceived, and he could not help being cool to Spicer in consequence. Spicer in retaliation threw all the blame upon Mamie, and held up Mr. James West as a shining paragon of virtue.

But, as the time went on, and no news, no letter or other token arrived from West, Mamie herself gave in. That he had deceived her she slowly became convinced of, and despair took hold of her heart.

Timberdale might have the satisfaction of knowing that she judged herself just as humbly and bitterly as they judged her, and was grieving herself to a shadow. Three years had passed now since her return, and the affair was an event of the past; and Mamie wore, metaphorically, the white sheet of penitence, and hardly dared to show her face outside the cottage-door.

But you may easily see how all this, besides the sorrow, told upon Lee. Fourteen shillings a week for a man and his wife to exist upon cannot be called much, especially if they have seen better days and been used to better living. When the first grandchild, poor little orphan, arrived to be kept, Lee and his wife both thought it hard, though quite willing to take him; and now they had Mamie and another grandchild. This young one was named Jemima, for Mamie had called her after her faithless husband. Five people and fourteen shillings a week, and provisions dear, and house-rent to pay, and Lee's shoes perpetually wanting to be mended! One or two generous individuals grew rather fond of telling Lee that he would be better off in the union.

It was November weather. A cold, dark, biting, sharp, drizzly morning. Andrew Lee got up betimes, as usual: he had to be out soon after seven to be ready for his letter delivery. In the kitchen when he entered it, he found his daughter there before him, coaxing the kettle to boil on the handful of fire, that she might make him his cup of tea and give him his breakfast. She was getting uncommonly weak and shadowy-looking now: a little woman, not much more yet than a girl, with a shawl folded about her shiver-

ing shoulders, a hacking cough, and a mild, non-resisting face. Her father had lately told her that he would not have her get up in a morning; she was not fit for it: what he wanted done, he could do himself.

"Now, Mamie, why are you here? You should attend to what I say, child."

She got up from her knees and turned her sad brown eyes towards him: bright and sweet eyes once, but now dimmed with the tears and sorrow for the last three years.

"I am better up; I am indeed, father. Not sleeping much, I get tired of lying: and my cough is worse a-bed."

He sat down to his cup of tea and to the bread she placed before him. Some mornings there was as a little butter, or dripping, or mayhap bacon fat; but this morning he had to eat his bread dry. It was getting near the end of the week, and the purse ran low. Lee had a horror of debt, and would never let his people run into it for the smallest sum if he knew it.

"It's poor fare for you this morning, father; but I'll try and get a morsel of boiled pork for dinner, and we'll have it ready early. I expect to be paid to-day for the bit of work I have been doing for young Mrs. Ashton. Some of those greens down by the apple-trees want cutting: they'll be nice with a bit of pork."

Lee turned his eyes in the direction of the greens and the apple-trees; but the window was misty, and he could not only see the drizzle of rain-drops on the diamond panes. As he sat there, a thought came

into his head that he was beginning to feel old: old, and worn, and shaky. Trouble ages a man more than work, more than time; and Lee never looked at the wan face of his daughter, and at its marks of sad repentance, but he felt anew the sting which was always pricking him more or less. What with that, and his difficulty to keep the pot boiling, and his general state of shakiness, Lee was older than his years. Timberdale had got into the habit of calling him Old Lee, you see; but he was not sixty yet. He had a nice face; when it was a young face it must have been like Mamie's. It had furrows in it now, and his scanty grey locks hung down on each side of it.

Putting on his top-coat, which was about as thin as those remarkable sheets told of by Brian O'Linn, Lee went out buttoning it. The rain had ceased, but the cold wind took him as he went down the narrow garden-path, and he could not help shivering.

"It's a bitter wind to-day, father; in the north-east, I think," said Mamie, standing at the door to shut it after him. "I hope there'll be no letters for Crabb."

Lee, as he pressed along in the teeth of the cruel wind, was hoping the same. Salmon the grocer, who had taken the post-office, as may be remembered, when the late Thomas Rymer gave it up, was sorting the letters in the room behind the shop when Lee went in. Spicer, a lithe, active, dark-eyed man of forty-five, stood at the end of the table waiting for his bag. Lee went and stood beside him, giving him a brief good-morning: he had not taken kindly to the man since West ran away with Mamie.

"A light load this morning," remarked Mr. Salmon

to Spicer, as he handed him his appropriate bag. "And here's yours, Lee," he added a minute after: "not heavy either. Too cold for people to write, I suppose."

"Anything for Crabb, Sir?"

"For Crabb? Well, yes, I think there is. For the Rector."

Upon going out, Spicer turned one way, Lee the other. Spicer's district was easy as play; Lee's was a regular country tramp, the farmhouses lying in all the four points of the compass. The longest tramp was over to us at Crabb. And why the two houses, our own and Coney's farm, should continue to be comprised in the Timberdale delivery, instead of that of Crabb, people could never understand. It was so still, however, and nobody bestirred himself to alter it. For one thing, we were not often at Crabb Cot, and the Coneys did not have many letters, so it was not like an every-day delivery: we chanced to be there just now.

The letter spoken of by Salmon, which would bring Lee to Crabb this morning, was for the Reverend Herbert Tanerton, Rector of Timberdale. He and his wife, who was a niece of old Coney's, were now staying at the farm on a week's visit, and he had given orders to Salmon that his letters, during that week, were to be delivered at the farm instead of at the rectory.

Lee finally got through his work, all but this one letter for the parson, and turned his steps our way. As ill-luck had it—the poor fellow thought it so afterwards—he could not take the short and sheltered way through Crabb Ravine, for he had letters that morning to Sir Robert Tenby, at Bellwood, and also for the Stone House on the way to it. By the time he turned

on the solitary road that led to Crabb, Lee was nearly blown to smithereens by the fierce north-east wind, and chilled to the marrow. All his bones ached; he felt low, frozen, ill, and wondered whether he should get over the ground without breaking down.

"I wish I might have a whiff at my pipe!"

A pipe is to many people the panacea for all earthly discomfort; it was so to Lee. But only in the previous February had occurred that damage to Helen Whitney's letter, when she was staying with us, which the authorities had made much of; and Lee was afraid to risk a similar mishap again. He carried Salmon's general orders with him: not to smoke during his round. Once the letters were delivered, he might do so.

His weak grey hair blowing about, his thin and shrunken frame shivering and shaking as the blasts took him, his empty post-bag thrust into his pocket, and the Rector of Timberdale's letter in his hand, Lee toiled along on his weary way. To a strong man the walk would have been nothing, and not much to Lee in fairer weather. It was the cold and wind that tired him. And though, after giving vent to the above wish, he held out a little while, presently he could resist the comfort no longer, but drew forth his pipe and struck a match to light it.

How it occurred he never knew, never knew to his dying day; but the flame from the match caught the letter, and set it alight. It was that thin foreign paper that catches so quickly, and the match was obstinate, and the wind blew the flame about. He pressed the fire out with his hands, but a portion of the letter was burnt.

If Timbuctoo, or some other far-away place had been within the distance of a man's legs, Lee would have made straight off for it. His pipe on the ground, the burnt letter underneath his horrified gaze, and his hair raised on end, stood he. What on earth should he do? It had been only a pleasant young lady's letter last time, and only a little scorched; now it was the stern Rector's.

There was but one thing he could do—go on with the letter to its destination. It often happens in these distressing catastrophes that the one only course open is the least palatable. His pipe hidden away in his pocket—for Lee had had enough of it for that morning—and the damaged letter humbly held out on his hand, Lee made his approach to the farm.

I chanced to be standing at its door with Tom Coney and Tod. Those two were going out shooting, and the Squire had sent me running across the road with a message to them. Lee came up, and, with a face that seemed greyer than usual, and a voice from which most of its sound had departed, he told his tale.

Tom Coney gave a whistle. "Oh, by George, Lee, won't you catch it! The Rector——"

"The Rector's a regular Martinet, you know," Tom Coney was about to add, but he was stopped by the appearance of the Rector himself.

Herbert Tanerton had chanced to be in the little oak-panelled hall and caught the drift of the tale. A frown sat on his cold face as he came forward, a frown that would have befitted an old face better than a young one.

He was not loud. He did not fly into a passion

as Helen Whitney did. He just took the unfortunate letter in his hand, and looked at it, and looked at Lee, and spoke quietly and coldly.

"This is, I believe, the second time you have burnt the letters?" and Lee dared not deny it.

"And in direct defiance of orders. You are not allowed to smoke when on your rounds."

"I'll never attempt to smoke again, when on my round, as long as I live, sir, if you'll only be pleased to look over it this time," gasped Lee, holding up his hands in a piteous way. But the Rector was one who went in for "duty," and the appeal found no favour with him.

"No," said he, "it would be to encourage wrong-doing, Lee. Meet me at eleven o'clock at Salmon's."

"Never again, sir, as long as I live!" pleaded Lee. "I'll give you my word of that, sir; and I never broke it yet. Oh, sir, if you will but have pity upon me, and not report me!"

"At eleven o'clock," repeated Herbert Tanerton decisively, as he turned indoors again.

"What an old stupid you must be!" cried Tod to Lee. "He won't excuse you; he's the wrong sort of parson to do it."

"And a pretty kettle of fish you've made of it!" added Tom Coney. "I'd not have minded much, had it been my letter; but he is different, you know."

Poor Lee turned his eyes on me: perhaps remembering that he had asked me, the other time, to stand his friend with Miss Whitney. Nobody could be his friend now: when the Rector took up a grievance he did not let it go again; especially if it were his own. Good-hearted Jack, his sailor-brother, would have

screened Lee, though all the letters in the parish had got burnt.

At eleven o'clock precisely the Reverend Herbert Tanerton entered Salmon's shop; and poor Lee, not daring to disobey his mandate, crept in after him. They had it out in the room behind. Salmon was properly severe; told Lee he was not sure but the offence involved penal servitude, and that he deserved hanging. A prosperous tradesman in his small orbit, the man was naturally inclined to be dictatorial, and was ambitious of standing well with his betters, especially the Rector. Lee was suspended there and then; and Spicer was informed that for a time, until other arrangements were made, he must do double duty. Spicer, vexed at this, for it would take him so much the more time from his legitimate business, that of horse doctor, told Lee he was a fool, and deserved not only hanging but drawing and quartering.

"What's up?" asked Ben Rymer, crossing the road from his own shop to accost Lee, as the latter came out of Salmon's. Ben was the chemist now—had been since Margaret's marriage—and was steady; and Ben, it was said, would soon pass his examination for surgeon. He had his hands in his pockets and his white apron on, for Mr. Ben Rymer had no false pride, and would as soon show himself to Timberdale in an apron as in a dress-coat.

Lee told his tale, confessing the sin of the morning. Mr. Rymer nodded his head significantly several times as he heard it, and pushed his red hair from his capacious forehead.

"They'll not look over it this time, Lee."

"If I could but get some one to be my friend with the Rector, and ask him to forgive me," said Lee. "Had your father been alive, Mr. Rymer, I think he would have done it for me."

"Very likely. No good to ask me—if that's what you are hinting at. The Rector looks upon me as a black sheep and turns on me the cold shoulder. But I don't think he is one to listen, Lee, though the King came to ask him."

"What I shall do I don't know," bewailed Lee. "If the place is stopped, the pay stops, and I've not another shilling in the world, or the means of earning one. My wife's ailing, and Mamie gets worse day by day; and there are the two little ones. They are all upon me."

"Some people here say, Lee, that you should have sent Mamie and her young one to the workhouse, and not have charged yourself with them."

"True, sir, several have told me that. But people don't know what a father's feelings are till they experience them. Mary was my own child that I had dandled on my knee, and watched grow up in her pretty ways, and I was fonder of her than any earthly thing. The workhouse might not have taken her in."

"She had forfeited all claim on you. And come home only to break your heart."

"True," meekly assented Lee. "But the Lord has told us we are to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven. If I had turned her adrift from my door and heart, sir, who knows but I might have been driven adrift myself at the Last Day."

Evidently it was of no use talking to one so unreasonable as Lee. And Mr. Ben Rymer turned back

to his shop. A customer was entering it with a prescription and a medicine bottle.

One morning, close upon Christmas, Mrs. Todhetley despatched me to Timberdale through the snow for a box of those delectable "Household Pills" which have been mentioned before: an invention of the late Mr. Rymer's, and continued to be made up by Ben. Ben was behind the counter as usual, when I entered, and shook the snow off my boots on the door-mat.

"Anything else?" he asked me presently, wrapping up the box.

"Not to-day. There goes old Lee! How thin he looks!"

"Starvation," said Ben, craning his long neck to look between the coloured globes at Lee on the other side the way. "Lee has nothing coming in now."

"What do they all live upon?"

"Goodness knows. Upon things that he pledges, and the vegetables in the garden. I was in there last night, and I can tell you it was a picture, Mr. Johnny Ludlow."

"A picture of what?"

"Misery: distress: hopelessness. It is several weeks now since Lee earned anything, and they have been all that while upon short commons. Some days on no commons at all, I expect."

"But what took you there?"

"I heard such an account of the girl—Mamie—yesterday afternoon; of her cough and her weakness; that I thought I'd see if any of my drugs would do her good. But it's food they all want."

"Is Mamie very ill?"

"Very ill indeed. I'm not sure but she's dying."

"It is a dreadful thing."

"One can't ask too many professional questions—people are down upon you for that before you have passed," resumed Ben, alluding to his not being qualified. "But I sent her in a cordial or two, and I spoke to Darbyshire; so perhaps he will look in upon her to-day."

Ben Rymer might have been a black sheep once upon a time, but he had not a bad heart. I began wondering whether Mrs. Todhetley could help them.

"Is Mamie Lee still able to do any sewing?"

"About as much as I could do it. Not she. I shall hear what Darbyshire's report is. They would certainly be better off in the workhouse."

"I wish they could be helped!"

"Not much chance of that," said Ben. "She is a sinner, and he is a sinner: that's what Timberdale says, you know. People in these enlightened days are so very self-righteous!"

"How is Lee a sinner?"

"How! Why, has he not burnt up the public's letters? Mr. Tanerton leads the van in banning him, and Timberdale follows."

I went home, questioning whether our folks would do anything to help the Lees. Nobody called out against ill-doings worse than the Squire; and nobody was more ready than he to lend a helping hand when the ill-doers were fainting for lack of it.

It chanced that, just about the time I was talking to Ben Rymer, Mr. Darbyshire, the doctor at Timberdale, called at Lee's. He was a little, dark man, with

an irritable temper and a turned-up nose, but good as gold at heart. Mamie Lee lay back in a chair, her head on a pillow, weak and wan and weary, the tears slowly rolling down her cheeks. Darbyshire was feeling her pulse, and old Mrs. Lee pottered about, bringing sticks from the garden to feed the handful of fire. The two children sat on the brick floor.

"If it were not for leaving my poor little one, I should be glad to die, sir," she was saying. "I shall be glad to go: I hope it is not wrong to say it. She and I have been a dreadful charge upon them here."

Darbyshire looked round the kitchen. It was nearly bare: the things had gone to the pawnbroker's. Then he looked at her.

"There's no need for you to die yet. Don't get that fallacy in your head. You'll come round fast enough with a little care."

"No, sir, I'm afraid not; I think I am past it. It has all come of the trouble, sir; and perhaps when I'm gone, the neighbours will judge me more charitably. I believed with all my heart it was a true marriage—and I hope you'll believe me when I say it, sir; it never came into my mind to imagine otherwise. And I'd have thought the whole world would have deceived me, sooner than James."

"Ah," says Darbyshire, "most girls think that. Well, I'll send you in some physic to soothe the pain in the chest. But what you most want, you see, is kitchen physic."

"Mr. Rymer has been very good in sending me cordials and cough-mixture, sir. Mother's cough is bad, and he sent some to her as well."

"Ah, yes. Mrs. Lee, I am telling your daughter

that what she most wants is kitchen physic. Good kitchen physic, you understand. You'd be none the worse yourself for some of it."

Dame Lee, coming in just then in her pattens, tried to put her poor bent back as upright as she could, and shook her head before answering.

"Kitchen physic don't come in our way now, Dr. Darbyshire. We just manage not to starve quite, and that's all. Perhaps, sir, things may take a turn. The Lord is over all, and He sees our need."

"He dave me some pep'mint d'ops," said the little one, who had been waiting to put in her word. "Andy, too."

"Who did?" asked the doctor.

"Mr. 'Ymer."

Darbyshire patted the little straw-coloured head, and went out. An additional offence in the eyes of Timberdale was that the child's fair curls were just the pattern of those on the head of James the deceiver.

"Well, have you seen Mamie Lee?" asked Ben Rymer, who chanced to be standing at his shop-door after his dinner, when Darbyshire was passing by from paying his round of visits.

"Yes, I have seen her. There's no radical disease."

"Don't you think her uncommonly ill?"

Darbyshire nodded. "But she's not too far gone to be cured. She'd get well fast enough under favourable circumstances."

"Meaning good food?"

"Meaning food and other things. Peace of mind, for instance. She is just fretting herself to death.

Shame, remorse, and all that, have got hold of her; besides grieving her heart out after the fellow."

"Her voice is so hollow! Did you notice it?"

"Hollow from weakness only. As to her being too far gone, she is not at present; at least, that's my opinion; but how soon she may become so I can't say. With good kitchen physic, as I've just told them, and ease of mind to help me, I'll answer for it that I'd have her well in a month; but the girl has neither the one nor the other. She seems to look upon coming death in the light of a relief, rather than otherwise; a relief to her own mental trouble, and a relief to the household, in the shape of saving it what she eats and drinks. In such a condition as this, you must be aware that the mind does not help the body by striving for existence, it makes no effort to struggle back to health; and there's where Mamie Lee will fail. Circumstances are killing her, not the disease."

"Did you try her lungs?"

"Partially. I'm sure I am right. The girl will probably die, but she need not die of necessity; though I suppose there will be no help for it. Good-day."

Mr. Darbyshire walked away in the direction of his house, where his dinner was waiting: and Ben Rymer disappeared within doors, and began to pound some rhubarb (or what looked like it) in a mortar. He was pounding away like mad, with all the strength of his strong hands, when who should come in but Lee. Lee had never been much better than a shadow of late years, but you should have seen him now, with his grey hair straggling about his meek, wan face. You should have seen his clothes, too, and the old shoes

out at the toes and sides. Burning people's letters was of course an unpardonable offence, not to be condoned.

"Mamie said, sir, that you were good enough to tell her I was to call in for some of the cough lozenges that did her so much good. But——"

"Ay," interrupted Ben, getting down a box of the lozenges. "Don't let her spare them. They'll not interfere with anything Mr. Darbyshire may send. I hear he has been."

But that those were not the days when beef-tea was sold in tins and gallipots, Ben Rymer might have added some to the lozenges. As he was handing the box to Lee, something in the man's wan and worn and gentle face put him in mind of his late father's, whose heart Mr. Ben had helped to break. A great pity took the chemist.

"You would like to be reinstated in your place, Lee?" he said suddenly.

Lee could not answer at once, for the pain at his throat and the moisture in his eyes that the notion called up. His voice, when he did speak, was as hollow and mild as Mamie's.

"There's no hope of that, sir. For a week after it was taken from me, I thought of nothing else, night or day, but that Mr. Tanerton might perhaps forgive me and get Salmon to put me on again. But the time for hoping that went by: as you know, Mr. Rymer, they put young Jelf in my place. I shall never forget the blow it was to me when I heard it. The other morning I saw Jelf crossing that bit of waste ground yonder with my old bag slung on his shoulder, and for a moment I thought the pain would have killed me."

"It is hard lines," confessed Ben.

"I have striven and struggled all my life long; only myself knows how sorely, save God; and only He can tell, for I am sure I can't, how I have contrived to keep my head any way above water. And now it's under it."

Taking the box, which Ben Rymer handed to him, Lee spoke a word of thanks, and went out. He could not say much; heart and spirit were alike broken. Ben called to his boy to mind the shop, and went over to Salmon's. That self-sufficient man and prosperous tradesman was sitting down at his desk in the shop-corner, complacently digesting his dinner —which had been a good one, to judge by his red face.

"Can't you manage to do something for Lee?" began Ben, after looking to see that they were alone. "He is at a rare low ebb."

"Do something for Lee?" repeated Salmon. "What could I do for him?"

"Put him in his place again."

"I dare say!" Salmon laughed as he spoke, and then demanded whether Ben was a fool.

"You might do it if you would," said Ben. "As to Lee, he won't last long, if things continue to be as they are. Better give him a chance to live a little longer."

"Now what do you mean?" demanded Salmon. "Why don't you ask me to put a weathercock on yonder malt-house of Pashley's? Jelf has got Lee's place, and you know it."

"But Jelf does not intend to keep it."

"Who says he does not?"

"He says it. He told me yesterday that he was sick and tired of the tramping, and meant to resign. He only took it as a temporary convenience, while he waited for a clerkship he was trying for at a brewery at Worcester. And he is to get that with the new year."

"Then what does Jelf mean by talking about it to others before he has spoken to me?" cried Salmon, going into a temper. "He thought to leave me and the letters at a pinch, I suppose! I'll teach him better."

"You may teach him anything you like, if you'll put Lee on again. I'll go bail that he won't get smoking again on his rounds. I think it is just a toss-up of life or death to him. Come! do a good turn for once, Salmon."

Salmon paused. He was not bad-hearted, only self-important.

"What would Mr. Tanerton say to it?"

Ben did not answer. He knew that there, after Salmon himself, was where the difficulty would lie.

"All that you have been urging goes for nonsense, Rymer. Unless the Rector came to me and said, 'You may put Lee on again,' I should not, and could not, attempt to stir in the matter; and you must know that as well as I do."

"Can't somebody see Tanerton, and talk to him? One would think that the sight of Lee's face would be enough to soften him, without anything else."

"I don't know who'd like to do it," returned Salmon. And there the conference ended, for the apprentice came in from his dinner.

Very much to our surprise, Mr. Ben Rymer walked

in that same evening to Crabb Cot, and was admitted to the Squire. In spite of Mr. Ben's former ill-doings, which he had got to know of, the Squire treated Ben civilly, in remembrance of his father, and of his grandfather, the clergyman. Ben's errand was to ask the Squire to intercede for Lee with Herbert Tanerton. And the Pater, after talking largely about the iniquity of Lee, as connected with burnt letters, came round to Ben's way of thinking, and agreed to go to the rectory.

"Herbert Tanerton's harder than nails, and you'll do no good," remarked Tod, watching us away on the following morning; for the Pater took me with him to break the loneliness of the walk. "He'll turn as cold to you as a stone the moment you bring up the subject, sir. Tell me I'm a story-teller when you come back if he does not, Johnny."

We took the way of the Ravine. It was a searching day; the wintry wind keen and "unkind as man's ingratitude." Before us, toiling up the descent to the Ravine at the other end, and coming to a halt at the stile to pant and cough, went a wobegone figure, thinly clad, which turned out to be Lee himself. He had a small bundle of loose sticks in his hand, which he had come to pick up. The Squire was preparing a kind of blowing-up greeting for him, touching lighted matches and carelessness, but the sight of the mild, starved grey face disarmed him; he thought, instead, of the days when Lee had been a prosperous farmer, and his tone changed to one of pity.

"Hard times, I'm afraid, Lee."

"Yes, sir, very hard. I've known hard times before, but I never thought to see any so cruel as these.

There's one comfort, sir; when things come to this low ebb, life can't last long."

"Stuff," said the Squire. "For all you know, you may be back in your old place soon: and—and Mrs. Todhetley will find some sewing when Mamie's well enough to do it."

A faint light, the dawn-ray of hope, shone in Lee's eyes. "Oh, sir, if it could be!—and I heard a whisper to-day that young Jelf refuses to keep the post. If it had been anybody's letter but Mr. Tanerton's, perhaps —but he does not forgive."

"I'm on my way now to ask him to," cried the Pater, unable to keep in the news. "Cheer up, Lee—of course you'd pass your word not to go burning letters again."

"I'd not expose myself to the danger, sir. Once I got my old place back, I would never take out a pipe with me on my rounds; never, so long as I live."

Leaving him with his new hope and the bundle of firewood, we trudged on to the rectory. Herbert and Grace were both at home, and glad to see us.

But the interview ended in smoke. Tod had foreseen the result exactly: the Rector was harder than nails. He talked of "example" and "Christian duty;" and refused point-blank to allow Lee to be reinstated. The Squire gave him a few sharp words, and flung out of the house in a passion.

"A pretty Christian *he* is, Johnny! He was cold and hard as a boy. I once told him so before his stepfather, poor Jacob Lewis; but he is colder and harder now."

At the turning of the road by Timberdale Court, we came upon Lee. After taking his faggots home,

he waited about to see us and hear the news. The Pater's face, red and angry, told him the truth.

"There's no hope for me, sir, I fear?"

"Not a bit of it," growled the Squire. "Mr. Tanerton won't listen to reason. Perhaps we can find some other light post for you, my poor fellow, when the winter shall have turned. You had better get indoors out of this biting cold; and here's a couple of shillings."

So hope went clean out of Andrew Lee.

Christmas Day and jolly weather. Snow on the ground to one's heart's content. Holly and ivy on the walls indoors, and great fires blazing on the hearths; turkeys, and plum-puddings, and oranges, and fun. *That* was our lucky state at Crabb Cot and at Timberdale generally, but not at Andrew Lee's.

The sweet bells were chiming people out of church, as was the custom at Timberdale on high festivals. Poor Lee sat listening to them, his hand held up to his aching head. There had been no church for him: he had neither clothes to go in nor face to sit through the service. Mamie, wrapped in an old bed-quilt, lay back on the pillow by the fire. The coal merchant, opening his heart, had sent a sack each of best Staffordshire coal to ten poor families, and Lee's was one. Except the Squire's two shillings, he had had no money given to him. A loaf of bread was in the cup-board; and a saucepan of broth, made of carrots and turnips out of the garden, simmered on the trivet; and that would be their Christmas dinner.

Uncommonly low was Mamie to-day. The longer

she endured this famished state of affairs the weaker she got; it stands to reason. She felt that a few days, perhaps hours, would finish her up. The little ones were upstairs with their grandmother, so that she had an interval of rest; and she lay back, her breath short and her chest aching as she thought of the past. Of the time when James West, the handsome young man in his gay regimentals, came to woo her, as the soldier did the miller's daughter. In those happy days, when her heart was light and her song blithe as a bird's in May, that used to be one of her songs, "The Banks of Allan Water." Her dream had come to the same ending as the one told of in the ballad, and here she lay, deserted and dying. Timberdale was in the habit of prosaically telling her that she had "brought her pigs to a fine market." Of the market there could be no question; but when Mamie looked into the past she saw more of romance than pigs. The breaking out of the church bells forced a rush of tears to her heart and eyes. She tried to battle with the feeling, then turned and put her cheek against her father's shoulder.

"Forgive me, father!" she besought him, in a sobbing whisper. "I don't think it will be long now; I want you to say you forgive me before I go. If—if you can."

And the words finished up for Lee what the bells had only partly done. He broke down, and sobbed with his daughter.

"I've never thought there was need of it, or to say it, child; and if there had been—— Christ forgave all. 'Peace on earth and goodwill to men.' The bells are ringing it out now. He will soon take us to Him,

Mamie, my forlorn one: forgiven; yes, forgiven; and in His beautiful world there is neither hunger, nor disgrace, nor pain. You are dying of that cold you caught in the autumn, and I shan't be long behind you. There's no longer any place for me here."

"Not of the cold, father; I am not dying of that, but of a broken heart."

Lee sobbed. He did not answer.

"And I should like to leave my forgiveness to James, should he ever come back here," she whispered: "and—and my love. Please tell him that I'd have got well if I could, if only for the chance of seeing him once again in this world; and tell him that I have thought all along there must be some mistake; that he did not mean deliberately to harm me. I think so still, father. And if he should notice little Mima, please tell him——"

A paroxysm of coughing interrupted the rest. Mrs. Lee came downstairs with the children asking if it was not time for dinner.

"The little ones are crying out for it, Mamie, and I'm sure the rest of us are hungry enough."

So they bestirred themselves to take up the broth, and to take seats round the table. All but Mamie, who did not leave her pillow. Very watery broth, the carrots and turnips swimming in it.

"Say grace, Andy," cried his grandmother.

For they kept up proper manners at Lee's, in spite of the short commons.

"For what we are going to receive," began Andy: and then he pulled himself up, and looked round.

Bursting in at the door, a laugh upon his face and a white basin in his hands, came Mr. Ben Rymer.

The basin was three parts filled with delicious slices of hot roast beef and gravy.

"I thought you might like to eat a bit, as it's Christmas Day," said Ben. "And here's an orange or two for you youngsters."

Pulling the oranges out of his pocket, and not waiting to be thanked, Ben went off again. But he did not tell them what he was laughing at, or the trick he had played his mother—in slicing away at the round of beef, and rifling the dish of oranges, while her back was turned, looking after the servant's doings in the kitchen, and the turning-out of the pudding. For Mrs. Rymer followed Timberdale in taking an exaggerated view of Lee's sins, and declined to help him.

Their faces had hardly done shining with the unusual luxury of the beef, when I dropped in. We had gone that day to church at Timberdale; after the service, the Squire left the others to walk on, and, taking me with him, called at the rectory to tackle Herbert Tanerton again. The parson did not hold out. How could he, with those bells, enjoining goodwill, ringing in his ears?—the bells of his own church. But he had meant to come round of his own accord.

"I'll see Salmon about it to-morrow," said he. "I did say just a word to him, yesterday. As you go home, Johnny may look in at Lee's and tell him so."

"And Johnny, if you don't mind carrying it, I'll send a drop of beef-tea to Mamie," whispered Grace: "I've not dared to do it before."

So, when it was getting towards dusk, for the Squire stayed, talking of this and that, there I was, with the bottle of beef-tea, telling Lee the good news that his

place would be restored to him with the new year, and hearing about Ben Rymer's basin of meat. The tears rolled down old Lee's haggard cheeks.

"And I had been fearing that God had abandoned me!" he cried, full of remorse for the doubt. "Mamie, perhaps you can struggle on a bit longer now."

But the greatest event of all was to come. While I stood there, somebody opened the door, and looked in. A tall, fine, handsome soldier: and I did not at the moment notice that he had a wooden leg from the knee downwards. Ben's basin of beef had been a surprise, but it was nothing to this. Taking a glance round the room, it rested on Mamie, and he went up to her, the smile on his open face changing to concern.

"My dear lassie, what's amiss?"

"James!" she faintly screamed; "it's James!" and burst into a fit of sobs on his breast. And next the company was augmented by Salmon and Ben Rymer, who had seen James West go by, and came after him to know what it meant, and to blow him up for his delinquencies.

"Mamie not married!" laughed James. "Timberdale has been saying that? Why, what extraordinary people you must be! We were married at Bristol—and I've got the certificate in my knapsack at Spicer's: I've always kept it. You can paste it up on the church-door if you like. Not married! Would Mamie else have gone with me, do you suppose? Or should I have taken her?"

"But," said poor Lee, thinking that heaven must have opened right over his head that afternoon to shower down gifts, "why did you not marry her here openly?"

"Because I could not get leave to marry openly. We soldiers cannot marry at will, you know, Mr. Lee. I ought not to have done it, that's a fact; but I did not care to leave Mamie, I liked her too well; and I was punished afterwards by not being allowed to take her to India."

"You never wrote, James," whispered Mamie.

"Yes, I did, dear; I wrote twice to Ireland, not knowing you had left it. That was at first, just after we landed. Soon we had a skirmish with the natives out there, and I got shot in the leg and otherwise wounded; and for a long time I lay between life and death, only partly conscious; and now I am discharged with a pension and a wooden leg."

"Then you can't go for a soldier again!" cried Salmon.

"Not I. I shall settle at Timberdale, I think, if I can meet with a pretty little place to suit me. I found my poor mother dead when I came home, and what was hers is now mine. And it will be a comfortable living for us, Mamie, of itself: besides a few spare hundred pounds to the good, some of which you shall be heartily welcome to, Mr. Lee, for you look as if you wanted it. And the first thing I shall do, Mamie, my dear, will be to nurse you back to health. Bless my heart! Not married! I wish I had the handling of him that first set that idea afloat!"

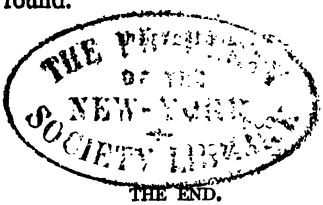
"You'll get well now, Mamie," I whispered to her. For she was looking better already.

"Oh, Master Johnny, perhaps I shall! How good God is to us! And, James—James, this is the little one. I named her after you: Jemima."

"Peace on earth, and goodwill to men!" cried old Lee, in his thankfulness. "The bells said it to-day."

And as I made off at last to catch up the Squire the little Mima was being smothered with kisses in her father's arms.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men!" To every one of us, my friends, do the Christmas bells say it, as Christ's Day comes round.



THE END.

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